

S E R M O N S
O N
V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S
A N D
O C C A S I O N S.

By the late Rev^d. FOWLER COMINGS,

(Late Fellow of Hertford College, Oxon;)

RECTOR of SWORDS, in IRELAND; PREBENDARY of
St. PATRICK's, DUBLIN; and CHAPLAIN to HIS
ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF
CUMBERLAND.

V O L. I.

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S E R M O N S

WITH PERMITS

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES

O C C A S I O N S

The late Rev. FOWLER TOMLINGS

TO ALL THE REV. FOWLER TOMLINGS

WITH THE MOST RESPECT



THE DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND

DEVOTED AND OBLIGED SERVANT

The Editor.

[WITH PERMISSION.]

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES

OF

The late Rev^d. FOWLER COMINGS,

ARE HUMBLY DEDICATED,

WITH THE MOST PROFOUND RESPECT
AND HUMILITY,

TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND,

BY HER GRACE'S

DEVOTED AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

The Editor.

IN THE PERMISSION
 ADVERTISING

THESE LINES, as they are intended to
 the public of the various request of many
 of the late Rev. Mr. C. and his parishioners,
 and the other members of the same, who
 are all humbly requested



WITH THESE LINES, as they are intended to
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 Editor therefore, in respect to the indul-
 gence of the press, is requested to

The Editor

Vol. I.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE SERMONS are now presented to the Public at the repeated request of many of the late Rev. Mr. Comings's parishioners, and others, who admired him as a good man, an excellent pastor and pious divine.

It is not however improper to observe, in justice to the Author, for any Inaccuracies which may appear, (notwithstanding the produce of the work is intended for benevolent purposes,) that he never designed them for the press; the Editor therefore respectfully solicits the indulgence of the candid Reader.

CONTENTS

ADVERTISEMENT

THESE SERMONS are now printed in
the form of a book, and are
of the late Rev. Mr. C. J. Fox, of
Give us this day our daily bread.
page 1.

an excellent labor and good doctrine
SERMON II.

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Give us this day our daily bread.
page 1.

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that he may be able to see the
when the Lord has put his hand
on for
page of the candid Reader.
p. 7

SERMON IV.

LUKE VIII. 18.

Take heed therefore how ye hear.
p. 27.

SER-

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

MATTHEW vi. 11.

Give us this day our daily bread. page 1.

SERMON II.

I. THESSALONIANS v. 19.

Quench not the spirit.

p. 17

a poor sermon

SERMON III.

LUKE vii. 13.

*When the Lord saw her, he had compassion
on her.*

p. 37

a very beautiful sermon

SERMON IV.

LUKE viii. 18.

Take heed therefore how ye hear.

p. 57.

CONTENTS.

SERMON V.

LUKE vii. 36, 37, 38.

And one of the pharisees desired him, that he would eat with him. And he went into the pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold! a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears.

P. 75.

Some things in this are good - but it is poor upon the whole.

SERMON VI.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

P. 91.

Not founded on text as considered with context but a General Exhortation to imitate X in forbearance &c. On the whole but Moderate.

SERMON VII.

LUKE ix. 54, 55, 56.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not

CONTENTS.

ix

not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. p. 105.

SERMON VIII.

Preached at the MAGDALEN, DUBLIN.

MATTHEW XXVI. 35.

Peter said unto him, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. P. 119.

SERMON IX.

I. COR. XV. 23.

Every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. P. 139.

SERMON X.

LUKE XVII. 27.

If any man take not up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple. P. 151.

SERMON XI.

MATTHEW XI. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto

unto him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

p. 169.

SERMON XII.

ISAIAH liii. 5, 6.

He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

P. 185.

Sadly defective & very little to purpose.

SERMON XIII.

LUKE xvii. 17, 18.

And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

p. 203.

SER-

CONTENTS.

xi

SERMON XIV.

I. PETER ii. 21, 22, 23.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously.

p. 221.

SERMON XV.

PSALM xxiii. 1, 2, 3.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.

p. 237.

SERMON XVI.

MATTHEW xviii. 11.

The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.

p. 261.

SER-

2ER

CONTENTS.

SERMON XVII.

PSALM XXVII. 7, 8, 9.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

p. 278.

SERMON XVIII.

LUKE X. 37.

Go, and do thou likewise.

p. 293.

SER-

the heart, and the powers of man: terrible
piety. This celestial Teacher, who well knew
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teache the most wisdom, who it can be

Vol. I



S E R M O N S
O N
V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.

S E R M O N I.

MATTHEW vi. 11.

Give us this day our daily bread.

THE holy prayer, which Jesus Christ has left for the edification of his church in every age, contains the substance of all those sublime doctrines, which distinguish and adorn the gospel. It might not unfitly be called an *abridgment* of christianity. Its truths are solid, as its devotion is elevated. It teaches the truest wisdom, while it inspires the heart with the most refined and exalted piety. This celestial Teacher, who well knew the heart, and the powers of man; sensible

Vol. I.

A

that

that the commandments he gave, at *all* times arduous, many times *painful*, could only be observed when man was strengthened by divine assistance, commanded us to make daily application to heaven in prayer for the help we want. And in this grand direction of our devotion all his own holy spirit is seen. He prostrates us in the presence of our God with profoundest humility, with trembling confidence, and there, while we are making known our wants to the mighty Father of heaven and earth, he commands us to raise our voices, and to proclaim with him the Almighty's praise; to whom alone belongeth the kingdom, and the power, and the glory of universal nature for ever and ever.

The time allotted to discourses like this, does not permit me to extend my observations to the whole of this sacred prayer. It is too abundant in matters of the highest moment, to be included within any such narrow compass. Restrained, therefore, within the limits prescribed to me, after making one general observation relative to the whole prayer, I shall only offer to your consideration such observations as shall seem

seem to me edifying, on that petition, which I have just read to you.

My intention herein is this: This holy prayer forms, as it most justly ought, a part of the devotion, public and private, of every christian. For besides its use in the temple-service, it is offered up by each of you in your closets, when you bow yourselves down in the Divine presence. I therefore wish to contribute, (if haply I *could* contribute to so blessed a purpose,) towards fixing your attention in the moments of your devotion, so that praying with suitable earnestness for the good and great things you want, you may depart from prayer to the proper employments of the day, dependent on the Divine goodness, and watchful to walk agreeably to the *spirit* of your prayers.

The *general* observation I would make is this: Prayer is *desire*: it is the desire of the creature rising up to its creator: it is the lowly, ardent supplication of feeble children on earth, offered up to their eternal, almighty parent in heaven. Take care, therefore, that the highest act, which man can perform, does not become a mere work of course. Take care that this sacred business

of the heart, which claims all its powers, which demands all its affections, does not degenerate into an odious service of the *lips* only. As there is great danger least this should happen, guard carefully against it. To this end, learn in private to offer up this venerable prayer aright; compose your minds into the utmost seriousness before you present the consecrated offering: and, when you enter upon it, dwell for some time on every single petition. Pray and *meditate* at the same time. Remember it is to be the direction of your life, as well as the desire of your heart. It is the lesson of eternal wisdom. Proceed, therefore, carefully. Let every single petition be well and duly weighed. Pause in sacred silence at the end of each, till you have caught the spirit which it is meant to convey to you. Thus, when you open this awful address in these words, "Our Father which art in heaven," stop there; and contemplate the goodness of this universal Father, from whom men and angels derive all their present powers, all their future hopes. Remember that this almighty power raised thee from the dust, and built thee up into the wondrous thing thou art.

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His goodness delighted to adorn thee with thy various animal and intellectual powers. He breathed his celestial spirit into thy nostrils, and thy lifeless clay rose up a living soul; rose up a creature that could adore, and could love its God; rose up an heir of a glorious immortality. Such mighty things hath your heavenly *Father* done for you. Ought so divine a relationship between God and man to be *mentioned* without the warmest gratitude; without the tenderest affection? But then this universal Father is in heaven. He is in heaven, and we on earth. From this our world, placed at so vast a distance from the brightness of his glory, raise your contemplations up to the heaven of heavens, and behold him there surrounded with that eternal splendour, which overwhelms the faculties even of those exalted spirits, which he has adorned with the highest powers. Behold him that creates worlds by his almighty word; that fills the various regions of the universe with the infinite productions of his unbounded power; that gives to each created thing the perfection of its nature; that gives to man his reason, to angels their immortality: reflect in hum-

ble silence on this your mighty, adorable Father in heaven; and then view thyself; thy own weakness; thy own imperfections; the dependence and uncertainty of thy own condition; and then, as is thy bounden duty, bow down thy soul and body before him, overwhelmed with humility, and lost in veneration. While your ardent praises ascend to him for what he *does*, let your dust and ashes tremble before what he *is*.

Thus carefully proceed, when you offer up this holy prayer to the Almighty. Dwell gravely on every petition and address, till you feel your heart inflamed with the holiness which it teaches. Then, if with this disposition thou enterest into thy closet, and thus prayest to thy Father in secret; thy Father, which seeth in secret, will reward thee openly: men and angels shall hereafter see that he hath heard thy prayers; that he hath accepted all thy petitions.

I now turn myself to the passage immediately before us. The first thing taught us in this petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is a pious, humble acknowledgment, that every good thing comes from our Father in heaven. It is to this sovereign

reign Lord of nature, in power almighty, in goodness infinite, that you are to go for support. All things in heaven and earth depend on his divine appointment. His will determines the fate of all created beings. He speaks, and each of us rises up, from the dust, the very thing he commands us to be. The *condition* of each individual is also according to his sacred decree. The good we enjoy, or the ills we suffer in the various stages of our threescore years and ten ; all, all is so, because he wills it. Nothing created may oppose, though but for a moment, the almighty word of him that created it. Eternal God ! all nature is the work of thy hands, and is created into a temple, in which thy glory is displayed ! Here things visible and invisible are as thou commandest ; are just what thou biddest ! To this blessed power must you apply for help. All that sustains you, all that comforts you, from whatever *secret* cause it may *seem* to come, proceeds from heaven. The overflowing riches of the wealthy are alike the gift of God, with the narrow morsel which just supports the beggar at your gate. From the throne of the Almighty his uncertain
subsist-

subsistence comes; and from thence too comes the profuse variety of the rich man's table. Things animate and inanimate, rich and poor, men on earth, and angels in heaven, are all supported from the infinite overflowing abundance of the divine nature: yes; he openeth his hands, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. The manna, which the reverend history of antient times informs us fell round about the tents of the Israelites, was not a whit more the good gift of heaven, than is the corn, that in its annual regularity springs from the earth, and supports *us* in this our day. The streams, which the same venerable records tell us flowed from the rock of flint, demanded not more thankfulness, than do the *perpetual* fountains, which the Almighty hath directed daily to pour forth their streams from the bowels of the earth, and to fill the channels consecrated to their use, for the refreshment of us his creatures. Whether miracles astonish us with the instantaneous display of almighty power; or whether the seasons regularly produce their stated abundance; *still* the daily bread we eat is *given* us. He that appointeth summer
and

and winter, seed-time and harvest, and gives to each its different powers for its different offices, perhaps displays his power more brightly by this beautiful, harmonious appointment, than he would if he rained down bread from heaven. Approach then this good and almighty Lord with lowly humility; and pray to him for a blessing on all your purposes. Whatever means you use, for the lawful encrease of your substance, consecrate them all by offering them up to the Almighty. And when thou art prosperous, praise thy good God, who made thee so. When thou enjoyest abundance, thank him whose bounty hath blessed thee; and furthermore, possess thy wealth with fearful humility; revolving the changes and chances of this mortal life; and feeling convinced that he, that hath now exalted thee, can, and will if so he pleases, in a moment depress thee. When thou art thus enjoying the abundance which heaven gives thee, turn thine eyes also to the poor and needy, and compare *thy* fulness with their wants; thy indulgence with *their* necessities. Thus view thy poor brethren, till thou art tender, merciful, and bountiful. Thus consecrate

secrate thy good things by charity, by humility, by gratitude. And as thou prayest to heaven for thy daily bread, whenever thou hast eaten and art satisfied, lift up thine eyes to thy God, and adore, and bless, and praise him, whose celestial goodness thus supports, and thus comforts thee from day to day.

This divine petition does furthermore teach a comfortable *dependence* on the Almighty, as well as *humility* and *gratitude* towards him. It teaches those in lower condition to *trust* in Him, as well as the rich to praise Him. The rich and poor are alike the children of one common, universal, impartial parent; and the Lord that made heaven and earth is the maker, yea, and the protector of them all. The gospel bids you open your eyes and learn an holy confidence in your God: it reminds you, that it is he that gives to the fowls of the air their food, to the flowers of the field their beauty; and hereby declares aloud its far greater care for man, its far greater work. When the evangelic dispensation, earnest to promote the full dependence of the creature upon its creator, is to describe the care of heaven

ven towards man, the lord of this world, it labours, as it were, to convey the idea; and the strongest proverbial phrase is used to express the divine protection; for it tells us, that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Thus is comfort and consolation held forth to those of low degree. He that teaches them to pray is prepared to hear their prayers. Bow down then before thy God and Father with humility; address Him with that energy of holy hope to which the work of His hands is entitled. In whatever condition He places you, conform thereto, and cultivate the virtues which belong to it. For to every station great and splendid virtues do belong. Your situation, be it what it may, is the road to God, and he himself has placed you in it. Ever remember that Jesus Christ was in outward condition as destitute as you can possibly be; for strange and sad as it should seem to tell, he had not where to lay his head. And yet along this dreary naked road of life he walked, and found himself, at the end of it, seated at the right hand of God.

Again; for the lessons of Jesus Christ *overflow* with instruction; in this divine petition
you

you are taught the *moderation* of your desires. When you are permitted to ask for *bread*, you are only permitted to ask for things necessary for your *lawful* wants ; not what will satisfy your unrestrained and irregular appetites. For these the Almighty makes no provision. They are the suggestions of a foul and foolish heart ; corrupted by luxury, covetousness, or ambition ; the bane of peace, of wisdom, and of righteousness. All the peace, that is to be obtained on earth, is derived from passions and desires well governed. If they are suffered to run wild, be the outward condition of ever so fair appearance, all is disorder, confusion, and wretchedness. That infinite wisdom, which formed the heart of man ; which gave it all its desires ; which endowed it with all its powers ; that same wisdom has directed it to seek for peace, not by *encouraging* passions, but by *opposing* them ; not by *increasing* our desires, but by *moderating* them.

Of such importance is this doctrine to the happiness of man, that this sacred petition carries it still further. For even this temperate provision, this *moderate* support you
are

are but allowed to ask from *day to day*. Your views are confined, as it were, within the present moment. “Give us *this* day our “*daily bread*,” is all the luxury, is all the ambition, nay, is all the *prudence* allowed by Jesus Christ to the faithful servants of God. Those mighty restless schemes, which penetrate into years yet far off; which comprehend generations not yet born; all these are the extravagant wanderings of a thoughtless animal, grasping at an endless existence here, while he stands on the very borders of that land, where all things are forgotten. All the precepts of Jesus Christ have their deep foundation in the *nature* of things. They are not *arbitrary commandments*; they are wise directions leading us to *peace*, as well as to *righteousness*. And if in one of these holy rules there can be more wisdom than in another, it is in this now before us; where our desires are directed by the uncertainty of our condition. For where is the wisdom in providing for years we shall probably never reach; or in guarding against wants which we shall, likely, never have? Surely man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself much in vain, while he labo-

laboriously heapeth up riches which he must speedily leave; and neglects the culture of that sacred, sublime wisdom, which leads the feeble sons of men to glory, honour, and immortality.

Learn wisdom then from your Saviour's instructions. Let your desires be regulated by your devotions. In all things catch and retain the spirit of this prayer, for it is the very spirit of God. As you pray to the God of heaven, good and merciful from eternity to eternity, depend on his righteous care for provision. Use an honest holy prudence in the station where God has placed you; and, without fears and anxieties about what may hereafter happen, depend on his fatherly goodness for yourselves, and for those most tenderly connected with you. As you are taught to ask from day to day for your daily bread, let this teach you to suppress the rage of ambition; to check the inordinate demands of covetousness; to stifle the gross suggestions of luxury; and to set bounds to a kind of false prudence, which, under the guise of wisdom, foolishly extends itself from age to age. Refer yourselves, and all that is dear to you, to that eternal, almighty, ador-

adorable power, which furrounds; and, while it furrounds, blesses the whole creation. Lift up your eyes with holy confidence, and see the streams of mercy and of glory flowing from the throne of God, to the utmost bounds of his great creation; and learn from the awful prospect to pray for your daily support with unshaken confidence, and with hope that may not be dismayed. See with what sacred harmony day succeeds to night; and with what celestial regularity the seasons rise up in their order. It is thy God who conducts the grand succession; that he may comfort and bless mankind from generation to generation. As creatures, destined to a blessed immortality, let your hopes and views be equal to the grandeur of your condition. For your threescore years and ten have no impious anxiety. Having food and raiment be therewith content; for so have your illustrious betters been before you. You are on the road to God; you are hastening to the regions of eternal glory. Animated by these bright prospects, the servants of God can view the shortness of life without terror, its changes and chances without anxiety. Though *we* rise up in the
place

place allotted us, and flourish for a short, a very short season truly, and again disappear for ever, when called away by the Almighty's voice ; yet, in this rapid succession of the generations of men, Thou, O glorious God of Nature, art the same eternal fountain of perfection, the same never-failing source of happiness to thy creatures, and thy years may not fail. In the boundless abyss of eternity, to which our feeble understandings cannot rise ; before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were formed, thou art God all-sufficient, all-glorious, and all-blessed from everlasting to everlasting, and world without end.

To Thee, therefore, great and eternal Father and God of Men, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion and power, adoration and praise, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen.*

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S E R M O N II.

I. THESS. V. 19.

Quench not the spirit.

THE gospel of Jesus Christ reveals to us the reconciliation of heaven and earth. That all-perfect Being, from whom floweth every good and perfect gift, seemed in some degree, almost ever since the foundation of the world, to have shut himself up from human view. Darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Men wandered through life, without knowing to what it tended: whether it was a good, or whether it was an evil, was a doubt with the very creatures that enjoyed it. They wished for knowledge, but found it not; they laboured for certainty, and died in doubt. Bewildered in their various enquiries, they fell into childish imaginations, and ridiculous delusions. The seed of Abraham alone enjoyed the knowledge of the Lord, while the rest of the world believed every absurdity, and practised every abomination. But

Vol. I.

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the sun of righteousness arose to dispel these dreadful clouds, and graciously revealed to the sons of men the way of knowledge, and the paths of peace. Hardly had the Saviour of the world seated himself again in his eternal glory, and received the homage of the heavenly host, when he sent down from on high his blessed spirit, to prove himself the mighty God, and to fill his waiting disciples with heavenly power. This divine messenger descended in an awful and solemn manner, and in a moment opened the eyes of the blind, and loosened the tongue of the dumb, to see the mercies, and to declare the glory of him that had been dead and was alive again, of him, who though the son of David, was yet the Author of every good, and every perfect gift. Then was displayed the mighty power of heaven; the weakness of man was in a moment lost and swallowed up in the strength of God. Those helpless disciples, strangers to wisdom and knowledge, in an instant spake to the confusion of the learned priests, and subtle philosophers. That almighty Being, who gives to each man understanding as to him seems good, instantly poured his light and truth into

into their hearts, and out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfected praise, to the honour of the blessed Jesus, who executeth his pleasure in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. But this was only the *beginning* of the gospel work; glorious and astonishing as it may seem, to hear the ignorant speak in various tongues, to see them give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead, this was only the first step in the work of God; this was only the introduction to a more glorious business, to a purpose infinitely more divine. The holy spirit descended on earth, to purify *your* hearts, to exalt *your* affections, and to change *your* lives. It was not to make you gaze, and astonish you with wonder, that he shook the house where the disciples were sitting; but it was that you might hear and reverence the glorious word which they preached, that you might open your hearts to receive that blessed spirit by whom they spake. He descended to deliver you all from the dominion of sin; to drive away every corrupt inclination, and to fill you with every angelic virtue, to adorn you with every heavenly grace. He came to renew the

earth in which we live, to fill its inhabitants with righteousness and purity. He came to restore to you the image of the Godhead in which you were created, and to exalt you to an union with the divine nature. Tremble then lest these purposes should not be accomplished; be afraid lest you should oppose the design of your Redeemer; look into yourselves that you quench not this spirit. For quench it you most certainly will, if you let your own natural appetites prevail; if you yield to the violence of your own nature; and submit not yourselves to the guidance of the spirit of God. Reflect on the misery to which you expose yourselves, if when the Almighty word speaketh, you hearken not; if when the eternal spirit mercifully pointeth out the way of light and life, you rush into the path of darkness and death. In order to avoid this dreadful opposition to the God of heaven and earth, let us consider to what his holy spirit calleth us, and then we shall at the same time see what it is that will quench it; for this we do, whenever we act against His directions; whenever He calleth us to one thing, and we follow another.—

How

not quite true

now

⁴How ¹universally it must be laid down, that ²the end for which the spirit of God visits ³the hearts of men is, that you may live to *they* the glory of God, and the good of each other. Whether you be high or low, whe- *they* ther you be rich or poor, the spirit of God *they* calleth upon you all, in your various stations, *their* to perform those acts, and to fulfill those obligations which He requireth at your *their* hands. The rich are by Him moved to devote their riches to that purpose, for which the Son of God devoted his precious blood; they are called upon to offer up their honours, to promote that blessed end, for which the Son of God offered up his life. Their authority, their influence is all given them to promote glory to God in the highest, and peace upon earth among men. They are abundantly to disperse bread to the hungry, cloaths to the naked, and assistance of every kind to them that want it. They are called upon by the merciful spirit of God, to be a father to the fatherless, and to plead the widow's cause. They are to protect wherever their protection is wanted; to turn away the uplifted arm of injustice, *and thus be* and to prevent the stroke of violence. The

poor and needy are their children, entrusted to their care by their heavenly Father, by that God who redeemed them with his own most precious blood, which will not suffer their tears to be lost, or their sighs and groans to be forgotten. Those who are exalted among the children of men, are exalted for this end. Their riches are given them to relieve the wants, their power to redress the grievances of those who suffer. The high example of their Lord and Saviour is placed before them; that they may, like him, as far as their power permitteth, do good to all that want, assist all that ask, whether they deserve it, or whether they deserve it not. They are called upon to banish misery, as far as they may, from the creatures of God; to remove care from the distressed, and to wipe away tears from the eyes of the afflicted. In a word, they are *to love*; and this love must shew itself in every thought they conceive, in every word they speak, in every act they perform. And as they are thus required by the spirit of God, to use the riches he has given them, for the purpose for which he gave them, so are they required by the same universal,
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unerring guide, to live *humbly* under them. Wealth and magnificence are not given to puff up the silly heart of man, to fill him with pride and haughtiness, or to inspire him with contempt and disdain. They are not given to distinguish him from among his fellow-creatures as the favourite of heaven, and the delight of the Most High; but as talents for which he must be nicely accountable, as advantages with which he must bless, and cheer the hearts of thousands. The spirit of God, therefore, calleth on the rich man to look on all as his brethren, as alike doomed here on earth to a life of pain and wretchedness; as alike destined, when the mysterious revolutions of ages shall be accomplished, to peace and glory everlasting. The christian, therefore, however high his station, however abundant his riches, dareth not to look on any as beneath him. He seeth all men carry that same nature to which the mighty God united himself, which Jesus Christ hath exalted far above the stars of heaven. In the poor he is called upon to behold his Saviour's poverty, in the servant his Saviour's humility. Remember, saith the spirit of God,
thy

thy Saviour's low degree, who took upon him the form of a servant, and had not where to lay his head, and then exalt thyself over these his brethren, then trample on those, to whom the Son of God, when on earth, was like. The spirit of God thus calleth the rich to humility; thus exhorteth them to love and cherish the lowest and meanest of mankind. Distinctions were only given to make men more useful, and ought truly to make them more humble. And however one man may differ from another for a day, during the short season of human life, yet the holy spirit sheweth that all have the same contemptible beginning, that all will have the same wretched end; for all have sprung from the clay ~~in the streets~~, and to that must all return. These are some of the many lessons which the eternal spirit readeth in the heart of man; and happy will it be for those of you whom it concerns, if you are not found to neglect the instructions of the Almighty, and to oppose the operations of his spirit. There are many of you, to whom what hath been said in some degree belongeth; though your riches may not satisfy your own unbounded, ungovernable wants, they are yet suffi-

sufficient to relieve the distressed of many, to comfort the hearts of numbers; and be assured, that an exact account thereof will be demanded by him who gave them for the benefit of his creatures, by him, who alike careth for the rich and for the poor. It is your business, therefore, and would indeed be your wisdom, to examine yourselves carefully on this head; not by what you see *others* do, but by what the gospel requireth of you. The pride and cruelty of others will be no kind of excuse for your want of tenderness and humility. The gospel requireth you, when you have the means of blessing in your hand, to bless and take care that your *conduct*, as well as your profession, be christian. And where it has not been so, as I am afraid will often be found to have been the case, then repent of what is past, and above all things, go and sin no more. Consider now, seriously, if you have not neglected the divine command, if you have not *quenched the spirit of God*. Have your riches, whether they be more or less, been employed to the benefit of your neighbour? Have they been dispersed with free and open hand, wherever
want

want and misery have appeared? Has your power been the support of the weak, and the comfort of the friendless? Or have you vainly and arrogantly laid out on yourself what was designed to administer to the assistance of your fellow-creatures? If this is the account that must be given of your wealth, as I am much afraid it is, you have then audaciously fought against the Majesty of Heaven; you have opposed his counsels, and *quenched* his spirit. When he calleth to charity and humility, you have been extravagant on yourselves, sparing to others, proud and haughty. All that God has entrusted you with, you have called your own; and have accordingly consumed it on you own lusts, or heaped it up in your own coffers. Puffed up with the vain conceit of these unprofitable possessions, your hearts have grown fat with luxury, and have swelled with pride. The holy spirit hath again and again called you to be charitable and humble, but you would none of his counsel, and have despised all his reproof. Else how comes it, that mankind are distinguished among us, who profess to embrace the gospel, just as they are where it is not known?

Though

Though baptized into one holy faith, though hoping to be members of the same mystic body, yet how does one man among us neglect the wants and sufferings of another? How do the rich despise the poor? Look into your own hearts, and see how they swell with disdain, when offended by one you are pleased to call your inferior: one would immediately conclude, from your absurd conduct on such occasions, that the earth was formed for you alone, and that the Almighty remembered none but you. Hence it comes, that those who dare to call themselves by the name of Christ, make riches and power the curse of the earth. *Here* we see tyrannic authority trampling on the weak and needy; *there* we see the poor and helpless falling down and perishing under the savage cruelty of their masters. Hardly can greater want of charity and humility be seen in Pagan countries, than among us who call ourselves the enlightened of God. But think you that is christianity? Have you persuaded yourselves that the holy spirit of God calleth you to pride and cruelty? Is it from Him, think you, that you are severe to those within your power,
that

that you despise those beneath you? These things, my brethren, ought not so to be; can the almighty fountain of love in you send forth the bitter streams of cruelty and severity? Can he, who doth good to all, whose mercy is over all his works, can he delight in the pride and uncharitableness of your hearts? Be assured, that whatever you may persuade yourselves, these things are an abomination to the God that is above. To act thus, is to renounce Christ Jesus, or what is much worse, is to offend those who judge of the gospel from your conduct. Make haste, then, to depart from this sore and abominable evil, for indeed it prevaieth much amongst you. Be you ever so little advanced above your neighbour in the foolish advantage of riches, what weak contempt, what over-bearing insolence appears in all your actions? Your hearts are not influenced by the spirit of love; you are self-conceited, proud, and vain; your actions proceed from the pride of your own nature, which, though black as the angel of darkness, yet conceiteth itself pure as light. You drive away the spirit of God by this diabolical disposition,
for

for in a proud and cruel heart he cannot dwell. Reflect, then, on your own conduct, and reflect on the danger you are in. Something, you may be sure, must be wrong in your hearts, or all would not be so wrong in your actions. Present yourselves, with the utmost humility, before the spirit of truth, and beg of him to take possession of your hearts, and to mould and fashion them, till he hath removed all the bitterness of nature, and hath filled them with the sweetness of the gospel. Otherwise you will oppose the wisdom of heaven, and most certainly quench the spirit of God.

And as this holy spirit thus calleth on the rich to follow his blessed directions; so is he also the same faithful guide, the same merciful instructor to the poor. He hath prepared his happiness alike for both, for with him is no respect of persons. These then he stirreth up to be industrious and patient, to be contented with the station He has in His wisdom allotted them, and to cast all their care on Him, by whose divine bounty angels in heaven, and men on earth are supported; who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.

ness. If they are poor, the blessed spirit teacheth them, it is the Lord who made them so. He giveth and He withholdeth riches; in both cases He is alike good, alike wise, alike glorious. Riches are denied them, because riches would not profit them; for otherwise, He that putteth down one and setteth up another as he pleaseth, could in a moment knock off the fetters of the slave, and place him in the throne of him that tyranniseth over him. If power is used to oppress him whom it was given to defend; if you suffer wrongfully, when in the faithful discharge of your duty, even here will the holy spirit inculcate patience, and exhort you to commit your righteous cause, in much submission, to Him that judgeth righteously. He teacheth you, in the midst of the unkindness of those above you, in the midst of the pride of those set over you, in meekness to possess your souls, for the almighty God is your safe protection. Your day in this world will soon be over, and in that which is to come, will be no power but the all-blessing power of love; where those that have travelled through much affliction, through want and desolation, will be admitted

mitted to the inexhaustible riches of the eternal kingdom, to the glories of the everlasting paradise. To you then that are poor doth the spirit of God again and again preach patience: He commandeth you to be content with your station, because that station is the best you could be in: He exhorteth you to adore the wisdom, and to admire the love of your Father which is in heaven, crying out with holy Job, "the Lord giveth, and the Lord with-holdeth, " blessed be the name of the Lord." In a word, He who is truth itself sheweth you, that yet a little while and your tears shall be wiped away; that from the gates of the cruel, unmerciful rich, where you lay neglected and unregarded, angels shall speedily convey you into Abraham's bosom. See then that you quench not the spirit; when He teaches you to be content in your lowly station, learn contentment with the ways of heaven; and, though in prison or the lowest poverty, ascribe honour and praise to the disposer of all things; when He teaches you subjection to those above you; whether they be good or bad, pay to them all their due, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour

honour belongeth : when he exhorteth you to *patience*, then quietly bear all things ; let patience have its perfect work, and follow the divine example of Him, who when He was reviled, reviled not again ; who when He suffered, threatened not ; so shall you, like your heavenly Saviour, through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God ; that as you have suffered with Him here on earth, you may also hereafter reign with Him in heaven.

And as the holy spirit thus in the general division of mankind calleth you to every thing good and holy, so doth He also in every particular station in which you can be placed. Of the *parent* he requireth love, tenderness and care ; that those whom he has been the means of bringing into life, He may also be the means of bringing to happiness in heaven and earth. Of the *child* He requireth affection, reverence and obedience ; that thus the inexperience and giddiness of youth may be preserved from harm, by the watchful wisdom of more advanced years. Of the *master* He requireth meekness, patience, and gentleness ; that thus a life of pain and labour may be softened

softened and relieved, and the humble state of those beneath him made as happy as may be, by the compassionate regard of Him whom they serve. Of the *servant* He requireth fidelity, care, and humility; that thus their service may be approved by their Master in heaven, who giveth to every man according to his deeds. Of all of you He requireth forbearance and subjection one to another; that thus pride, and an over-weening opinion of yourselves, those hateful plagues of society, may be removed, and peace, harmony, and love, be preserved among men. These are some of the many things to which the spirit of God calleth you: His business is to carry you on from strength to strength, till He hath raised you to the angelic height of gospel perfection. Obey therefore all His motions, for they are the motions of almighty love. He meaneth to lead you from earth to heaven, from grace to glory. But, alas! who among you hearkeneth to His words, or followeth His divine direction? Each man liveth as his own crooked nature suggesteth, and thus do you do despite to the spirit of grace. Instead of humbling your passions, and purifying

Vol. I. C fying

fyng your hearts, you shew your filly zeal in wrangling about notions, and contending about opinions. One cryeth, he is of Paul, another he is of Apollas; one among you is of this denomination of christians, another of that; and think you that this will avail? See how shamefully you have all departed from the spirit of the gospel, see how you have turned the world upside down by your enormous vices; and then ask yourselves, whether the Son of God came down on earth, to plant among you such a religion as this? He came to renew and change the face of the earth; He sendeth His holy spirit now and ever among you, to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He hateth your fiery disputations; and your mad controversies, proceeding from proud and corrupted hearts, He cannot away with. He requireth you to love charity, to pursue humility, to be tender and compassionate to all, with the tenderness and compassion of angels, be they high or low, be they rich or poor, be they good or bad. Instead of this He will accept no sacrifice, instead of this He will receive no prayers, but the soul that will not hearken shall

shall surely die. Make haste then to fly from your own passions; offer yourselves up to the Saviour of the world, that He may cleanse you from your sins; offer yourselves up from day to day to the eternal purifying spirit of God, that He may by His almighty power drive away your foul affections, that He may exalt your mean desires, and purify your fordid appetites; that from natural, which you are now, He may make you, what you are not, spiritual; that from children of this world, which you are now, He may make you, what you are not, the humble, faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

This Sermon, we have been far better if it had been written upon some text that inculcates Love, Humility, & Obedience to God's Commands -

There is nothing in it descriptive of the Spirit's Operation nor any thing of 3 different ways or degrees in which Men quench the Spirit.

Are there any Proofs adduced from Scripture either in relation to the Spirit, or in support of what He treats upon in the Sermon

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32
S E R M O N I I

shall finally sin. These things then to be
from your own passions; offer yourselves up
to the favour of the world, that He may
draw you from your sins; offer yourselves
up from day to day to the eternal purifying
spirit of God, that He may by His almighty
power drive away your transgressions, that
He may exalt your mind above, and purify
your torrid appetites; that He may draw
which you are now. He may make you what
you are not spiritual; that from children
of this world, which you are now, He may
make you what you are not, the humble
followers of Jesus Christ.

S E R

S E R M O N III.

LUKE vii. 13.

*When the Lord saw her, he had compassion
on her.*

ONE special advantage, afforded by the evangelic dispensation, arises from the *perfect* character of Jesus Christ. When we hear him as a teacher, his precepts ascend to that high sublimity, that feeble man, oppressed with many infirmities, and subject to many weaknesses, stands astonished at the perfection to which he is commanded to aspire. But to give life to these great precepts, we see the teacher *practising* what he *commanded*. He not only pointed out the road that leads to God, but he walked before us in it; and conducts us, as it were, by the hand in the path of righteousness, till he brings us to the very footstool of the throne of the Almighty.

Among other great designs, it is with a view of affording us this high instruction in

an extensive manner, that the faithful witnesses of Jesus have given us an ample history of his life. They have recorded its holy progress for our information; and have related a variety of the greatest actions; that we, admiring their celestial beauty, might go and do likewise. The life of Christ, viewed by you in this light, will be an eternal teacher. Every circumstance thereof will overflow with edification. From his lowly nativity, preaching, with arguments unanswerable, the profoundest humility to the christian world; from thence to his painful, fearful sufferings on the cross, teaching the most reverential, silent submission to the awful dispensations of our Almighty God; all is full of the richest instruction.

That I may prove, by an example, the truth which I would wish to impress upon you, I mean to make a few easy observations on the good work which is recorded in that passage, from whence I took the words which I have just read to you. The narration, carefully attended to, will shew you the advantages which christians may derive from the example of Christ. Splendid as
was

was the action, and mighty as was the power which was exerted in it, you may still tread in his steps; you may display the *spirit*, though you have not the *power* of Jesus.

The miracle is, I doubt not, well known to you all; for what disciple of the blessed Jesus can be inattentive to so much mercy? I shall, therefore, for this, as well as for some other reasons, only take a short view of it, in order to give a perspicuity to the observations I mean to make; and to the instructive lessons which it affords. The substance of the narration is this: As Jesus Christ was going to the city of Nain, they were carrying out of the city a dead man, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Good God! to what calamities does human nature stand exposed, when we can in a moment be thus stripped of all that is near and dear to us! When the thing we *best*, perhaps we *only* love, can thus in a moment be for ever taken away from us by the sacred, irresistible power that gave it! Who can express, in words strong enough, the dependence of man upon his God! Great God! we only enjoy what Thou pleatest, and just as long as Thou pleatest;
and

and whether thou givest, or whether thou takest away, blessed be thy holy name.

This poor afflicted person, overwhelmed with the weight of her sorrows, does not even look out for help. *He* was standing by her, who *went about* doing good; of whom fame proclaimed, justly and loudly proclaimed, that he healed the sick, and raised the dead. But she, swallowed up in grief, and benumbed with her sorrows, dwells only on the tender object of her affection, whom she is going to consign to the darkness of the grave. But “when
“ the Lord saw her, he had compassion on
“ her.” Blessed Jesus! how divinely does thy mercy shine on this great occasion! O God of heaven! breathe the same celestial spirit into all that call themselves christians! Let them view their master standing by the dead youth, to do the deed of charity, till charity work in them her perfect work!

See how this illustrious teacher of mercy proceeds: the afflicted mother acknowledges no power in *him* to help her; she does not say, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst restore thy distracted servant to peace; for speak the word only, and my son, my only son shall

shall live. No; she shews no faith; she makes no acknowledgment of his power or of his mercy; she is silent. But she is *miserable*; and such were tender objects to Christ; and such *are* tender objects to every illuminated servant of God. Jesus therefore, regardless of faith, not caring whether she believed, or whether she did not believe; and neglecting his wonted mode of acting, says unto her, weep not. And *hastening* to the bier, he says, young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak; and Jesus delivered him to his mother.

Such a narration admits of no comment. Its ~~sweet~~ beauties would fade, and its mighty force be weakened by any explanation. Your own hearts, in the *stillness of retirement*, will best feel its force; will be most powerfully stirred up to admire and imitate it. I turn myself, therefore, to its use.

What manner of persons ought *you* now, who bear the name of Christ, do you think, to be? Why is this sacred benevolence thus minutely described? Why did the good evangelist, whose breast, while he relates the transaction, glows with the sacred warmth

warmth of his master's charity? Why did he preserve and lay open, for the contemplation of remotest ages, the tenderness of his good and gracious master? The holy Jesus acted, and the faithful servant gladly recorded the transaction, that the same spirit, which was in Christ Jesus, might be also in you.

In this light give me leave to make a few observations on this account; such as naturally result from it; and such as it will be your wisdom to enlarge upon in your own minds; when in the holy silence of the closet you ask yourselves, what the universal Father, and sovereign Lord of nature requires at your hands, when he has placed you in such a world as this of ours? For look around, on the right hand and on the left, sufferings and misery appear in ten thousand various forms. All ages are doomed thereto; all regions groan thereunder. The untaught peasant, as well as the most illuminated philosopher knows, because both *see*, and both *feel*, that man is born to misery as the sparks fly upwards. For a conviction of this truth, no laboured proofs, or tedious reasonings are necessary. Nothing else is wanting,

wanting, but not to shut our eyes, or stop our ears. All around us proclaims, that few and evil are the days of the years of the life of man.

See, in every neighbourhood, how many afflicted persons are sinking under their load of misery. Poverty, sickness, misfortunes, and sorrows of a thousand various forms, present themselves to our view. At one time, the industrious, the worthy, and the amiable, in *an instant*, plunge from the height of prosperity into the lowest depth of adversity. A sad train of accidents, unforeseen by human wisdom, not to be provided against by human power, does oftentimes render the liberal and the generous the humblest, and the noblest subjects, on which the charity of man can be exercised. Their elevated dignity of sentiment remains, though the outward condition is changed from end to end.

Again; transport yourselves into the cottages of the sick and aged poor. Behold their sufferings; behold their wants. See what they have to bear; and see how little they have to lighten what they bear. View their naked cottages, and see whether sufferers,

ferers, so sadly circumstanced, have not a right *divine* to the kindest, to the profusest aid of their fellow creatures.

There is nobody that knows so little of human life, as to think that I can exaggerate its calamities. Alas! the time would fail me, should I but attempt to enumerate them. And I, besides, have no powers to paint its various distresses in colours strong or glowing enough. If I had, I would exert them all to plead the cause of my helpless fellow creatures; and to send you from here inflamed with the holy ardency of mercy, to help, to comfort and to bless them, wherever you found them.

For this purpose only do I dare to touch on the awful darkness of the divine dispensations. It is, if haply I could do it, to excite the celestial spirit of charity; and not, O eternal God! to presume to form the smallest judgment concerning thy most righteous appointment! Clouds and darkness, impenetrable by the feeble eye of man, are round and round about Thee; but still adoring Thy divine nature, we are well convinced that though we suffer, yet was not this the best road for man, Thou, O God,
art

art so wise, so mighty, so good, we should not suffer!

But notwithstanding the unfitness of our faculties, to form an adequate judgment of the divine œconomy in this arduous point, still one very obvious reason of so much suffering in our world appears: it is, that *you* may have daily opportunities of cultivating the finest feelings of your nature; of advancing fast towards the perfection of humanity; of attaining the high honour of resembling the God of heaven and earth, whose mercy is over all his works. Amidst the jarring disputes then, of christians, madly contending for opinions, outrageously violent for notions, we have here found the mode of worship, without controversy, acceptable to the Almighty; we have here found the place where He delighteth to be served. The cottages of the afflicted are the holiest altars in our world; there you may lay those thank-offerings of gratitude, which you wish to present to your God, in humble, pious acknowledgment of the endless blessings which from day to day, and from hour to hour he is mercifully pouring down upon you. Gifts offered up to the
Almighty

Excellent

Almighty and then presented to the poor and needy, are the choice oblations which heaven will accept; these are precious sacrifices, perfumed with the rich incense of charity; the odour whereof will ascend truly grateful from earth to the throne of God. Though our almighty Lord is great, (and so great, O God, Thou art, that we are lost in the very endeavour to contemplate Thee!) and though He supplies his infinite creation with all its infinite riches, yet still we (poor and feeble as we are) can make an offering even to *Him*, from whom all things derive their all. He has Himself erected His altar in the habitation of the poor destitute; and He has Himself consecrated them the priests, to receive the abundant acknowledgments which are due from us to *Him*, the parent and the Lord of nature. Offerings, presented to heaven by such priests, will bring down mercies great and abundant upon you; and when they dismiss you with their blessings, you must be blessed.

In cultivating this divine disposition, and in performing the great works of mercy, which flow from it, you will receive much profitable

profitable direction by taking a very careful view of the behaviour of Jesus Christ towards the afflicted widow.

Observe then, that He proportioned his bounty to the occasion. The want was great, and His help was great. To give your charity its grand perfection, you must imitate this proceeding. You must relieve bountifully, where the misery is heavy, and your means are plentiful. We must not be cut short with cold and impious maxims, framed in the selfish breasts of wicked men, as void of wisdom as of feeling. We must not be told, by the bold perverters of good instruction, "That he that does not provide for his own house, is worse than an infidel." He is a very bad person indeed, that does not do *that* sacred work of nature. He is not only worse than an infidel, but he is worse and lower than a beast of the field. But let me entreat you to look about into your *indulgences*, and see how many of them can be spared, and yet you want no good thing. If in your self-examination any *luxurious* enjoyments should be discovered, surely it will be wise and it will be good at least to *diminish* them. But if vanity should

should be found, let her silly cravings without ceremony be boldly rejected; and run at least with savings such as these to the houses of the miserable, and bring down upon your head the blessings of those that are ready to perish. I may be permitted on this occasion just to suggest, that so numerous and so unnecessary to comfort are divers of the present modes of life, that a restraint of oneself, in many of these fantastic, childish trifles, would enable one to be abundantly charitable, without a diminution of one real comfort; much less without offending in the least against prudence.

To those of you, of more moderate condition, I may say, that even out of the honest provision, made for your families and children, it would many times be *well* yea, and *wisely* done, to relieve the sore calamities of your good neighbours. In the course of human affairs it is oftentimes found, that by means of your own prudent conduct, and the success with which God blesses your commendable industry, you could be very bountiful in your charities, and yet leave your children full and full enough; and *that* enough secured by the blessing of heaven

heaven beyond the reach of time and chance.

The *bounds* of charity indeed admit of no *general* limitation. They vary with every individual's circumstances. But there is certainly no difficulty in the determination. Each person's condition in life tells him, at once, what he is able to do. If, gloriously animated with the sacred love of God, you *wish* to shew *that* holy love by its genuine fruits, by doing good to man, His creature; you *will* not, you *cannot* err. Actuated by this sublime principle, when you *wish* to do right, you *will* do right. You will use no mean and wicked prevarications; you will not, on such occasions say, that you are less rich than you are; for this would be ungrateful to the good God, who gave you your riches; and who may, for what you know, punish your ingratitude and want of mercy, by making you no richer than you say you are. You will not plead against the sanctity of charity, that you are to get yourself a name by heaping up riches, and by leaving a proud fortune to one knows not who; to those, who, be as near to you as they may, will have no tenderness for your

Vol. I. D memory;

memory; nay who, perhaps, as we daily see, will not treat it with common decency; but will delight to turn into ridicule, as it well deserves, the folly of your ill-judged, wicked parsimony.

But, contrarywise, the faithful servants of God will ever remember, that works of mercy are the high command of heaven; that they are the solid and grand duty of man; that, from the condition of human life, daily and hourly have they opportunities of performing some or other of these sweet works; and steadily and invariably will they continue therein; ever remembering, that they lead them on from excellence to excellence, till they become perfect and glorious as the angels of God; till they are so great, that the good works, which they have begun on earth, can only be finished in heaven. Such honour have all the saints of God.

There is another circumstance to be very heedfully attended to in this evangelic narration, from whence you must borrow much, to give your charity its full perfection. You see that Jesus Christ did not wait to be *sent to*. There was no application made to him.
The

The dismal circumstances of the distress (though fearfully dismal they were) were not laid before him to move his compassion, and to obtain his help. He *heard*, or he *knew* there was such *misery*, and that was enough for the perfection of Jesus. And thus all that *can* help the wretched are called upon, not by the entreaties of men, but by the eternal voice of God to help. Where your counsel, your tenderness, or your bounty can relieve, there is the place to which heaven calls you. Wait not to be prevailed upon by *arguments* to visit the house of mourning, but hasten there to learn wisdom, and to put it in practice. Let not the wretched, while the very bitterness of their grief is upon them, be obliged to *solicit* your help, but do you contrive the best way to help them. They, poor souls! are swallowed up in sorrow. Loss of friends, of health, or of fortune, has depressed their spirits, and deprived them of their wonted activity. Stillness is best adapted to their sad condition; and ill can an heart, torn with sorrow, perform the doubtful work of supplication. Its feelings are nice; its fears are scrupulous. The

afflicted know, that most men are inclined to avoid them, as a restraint upon their chearfulness, or a check upon their pursuits. In many cases, therefore, these unhappy persons are fearful of applying for help, least one calamity should grow upon another; least, while the awful hand of heaven lies heavy upon them, the cruelty of men should fill up the measure of their suffering; and their sorrows should become greater than they are able to bear.

In these demands, therefore, upon your mercy, believe me, it is your bounden duty to search about and see, (and God knows, you will soon see,) who in your neighbourhood is afflicted; and then to examine, and *that* not lightly and after the manner of dissemblers with God; but to examine, gravely and honestly, with what abilities of softening their affliction, the Almighty in his gracious goodness has blessed *you*. You are not to wait till instances of doing good are brought to your very door. You are *born* to do good to those about you; you are to be *active, industrious, and earnest* in the holy work; and you are abundantly endowed by the bountiful hand of God
with

with the means of being so. He has enriched you with an understanding, by which you can advise; He has given you wealth in greater or less degrees, by which you can relieve; and He has adorned you (if corrupted by the evil maxims of the world, you have not impiously rooted it out yourselves,) with a sweet tenderness of nature, which powerfully urges you on to perform the holy deeds of charity and of mercy. He has also (and adored be His wisdom for so doing! He has also) so fashioned you, that while you are doing, and when you have done such sacred works, the highest delight arises from the contemplation of them. Yes; the merciful man doeth good to his *own* soul. Hasten then, I pray you, from day to day, from your own habitations, the seats, it may be, of plenty and of cheerfulness, to the reverend abodes of the miserable, to bless *them*; to bless *yourselves*. Think how great the *honour* is of being appointed by your God, to discharge so grand a work. Holy Jesus! thou didst not appear more glorious on the morning of thy resurrection; no: not more splendid, when through the blaze of celestial light that surrounded thee,

*a bold
thought*

the keepers did shake, and became as dead men; than thou didst, when in the splendor of thy charity, thou wast walking to the city of Nain, to restore the afflicted mother her son and her peace! And be assured, the like glory is yours, when you are going to the habitations of sorrow and distress to pity, to relieve, and comfort. You are then a messenger, you are then an angel, *you are then a child of God.*

so strong!

3

And to *compleat* your charity, let me entreat you, before I close, to look once more into the conduct of the holy Jesus. When he saw the afflicted widow, the distracted mother, he had compassion on her. A partaker of her sorrows, different from his wonted mode, he *hurries* to relieve her; or rather, indeed, he seems unable to bear the power of his own feelings upon this sad occasion. Instantly he says unto her, "weep not." And that instant he uttered that voice, which even the dead can hear, and anticipated the day of resurrection to comfort her. Learn then, from this fine example, not only to do good, but to *do it well*; *do it tenderly.* Here, far above every other case, *manner* is necessary. The feelings

*Delightful
thought*

ings of men are wonderfully refined by affliction. They are all over very tender. What would not be regarded, or even felt in *prosperity*, wounds to the very soul in *adversity*. The afflicted are *sacred* persons; they must be approached even by their *benefactors* with reverence.

Let me now entreat you, as the faithful servants of the Most High God, to give free scope to your tenderest feelings; to let mercy have in all things, her perfect work. It is the glory of man, to weep with those that weep. The tears of sympathy are your highest ornament; and of such a wonderful nature are they, that they shall wipe away the stain of your offences against your good, and Almighty God. For the merciful *must* obtain mercy. The benedictions, which the afflicted and the miserable shall have pronounced upon you on earth, will be ratified in the heavens above; they will stand recorded in never-failing characters; and will be remembered to you for good in those dark and awful moments which are coming apace upon us all, when human nature needs much consolation; for as you shall have delivered others from sad affliction,

so

good

if more quar-
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horrible!

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so in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, your good and gracious God will stretch out his Almighty arm to save you; He will delight to shower down his choicest blessings upon you, and around you; and Himself will mercifully conduct you through the valley of the shadow of death, to the blessed regions of eternal charity.

SER-

S E R M O N IV.

LUKE viii. 18.

Take heed therefore how ye hear.

TH E R E is nothing in which men so universally deceive themselves, as in the matter of religion. He that can with patience hear, and in his judgment approves of the law of christian charity, immediately concludeth that he loveth his brethren, as a disciple of Christ ought to love them. He that with his tongue confesseth, that none can come to Christ, but with a deep humility that influenceth every thought of the heart, instantly supposeth that he thereby walketh humbly with his God. He that sometimes readeth, and sometimes speaketh on the mysteries of the gospel, who hath a zeal for notions, and an eagerness for religious opinions, this man ranks himself among the favourites of heaven, and is in his own esteem one of those that follow the Lamb whither-

whithersoever he goeth. Though this artifice may prevail on earth; yet will nothing but truth and justice prevail in heaven. He is no follower of Jesus Christ, who followeth him but in words. To hear his name, and to bow before it, is no mark of christian obedience, or the least sign of gospel-conversion; for such homage is paid by those dark spirits beneath the earth, as well as by the purest angels in the highest heaven. Yet important as this delusion is, it hath well-nigh infected all ranks and orders of men amongst us; it hath counter-acted the almighty workings of divine grace; it hath made of none effect the wholesome doctrine of the cross; it hath changed the powerful spirit of the gospel, into a noisy, disputatious, idle, unprofitable wrangle of words. It hath represented the blessed message of life as a bundle of opinions; the blessed spirit of love and gentleness, as fiery wrath and bitterness. In a word, the corruptions of those that call themselves by the name of Christ, have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. We hear of much *disputing* in the christian world, we see but little obedience. One man is content

tent if he can but hear the word of God read and expounded in the great congregation; another is abundantly satisfied, and promiseth himself the brightest crown of everlasting life, if he is but united with some chosen band of souls, professing greater purity of doctrine, greater holiness of life. But both this and the other have most shamefully forgot, that obedience is the only praise, the only offering which the Almighty accepteth. In the midst therefore of this general depravity of those that call themselves by the name of Christ, do *you* take care how ye hear. Consider carefully with yourselves for what purpose the Son of God came down on earth, and you will then know for what purpose He hath commanded his ministers to preach, for what purpose He hath commanded his people to hear, to the end of the world. Now the end of the gospel is the purification of man; for this the blood of the Son of God was shed; for this the eternal spirit is now and forever given. For this was the word of God, the scripture of truth, sent down from heaven, and ministers appointed to explain and enforce it. For this end are our never-ceasing prayers
to

to ascend up to the throne of grace; and for this important purpose are the venerable sacraments of our Lord's institution to be humbly revered. Man, revolted from God, the source of life and happiness, and plunged into corruption and misery, is called upon by the voice of God, to hear and live. The Son of man is come to seek and to save us who are lost. No hearing then is of God, but that which contributeth to the *salvation* of them who hear: the gospel consisteth not in speculation, but in power. It was sent down to renew the face of the earth; and to advance us, when this poor transitory life is over, to the kingdom of heaven. So hear then as Christ requireth you to hear, not as most of you do hear, so as to disgrace that gospel to which you pretend obedience. Infinitely better would it be for you never to hear the word of life, than when you have heard it, to oppose it by your actions, and blaspheme it by your fordid passions. Let us consider then those kinds of hearing which we are cautioned against by our Lord, that so you may learn to hear with reverence to Him, and with profit to yourselves.

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The first kind of hearers I shall take notice of as disgracing the gospel of Christ, are those who think the business is done, when the word of God has been heard; who very quietly and with much indifference can hear the will of heaven laid open, and yet continue just as disobedient to it, as if they knew it not. Of this kind perhaps, at first sight, there may seem to be few; but whoever looks into the christian world a little more carefully will find, that the bulk of mankind are of this sort. Else how comes it that you, who hear so much, produce so little fruit? How comes it that you, who have the divine example of your Lord and Saviour so frequently held out to you, oppose it in all your conduct, and act directly contrary to it from day to day? How comes it that you, who are so frequently exhorted to despise the mean and unmanly pleasures of this world; who are told so often, that dust you are, and unto dust you must speedily return, and that therefore now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, in which you must provide for your immortal souls, and secure an eternal happiness; how comes it that you, who hear all this
again

again and again, are yet as much fixed on this world below, as if you were to continue here for ever; are yet as negligent about avoiding the vengeance of Almighty Justice, as if you were to die and rise no more? How comes it that you, who hear so much of divine love, and christian charity, are yet so hard and cruel to those about you? How comes it, that you will one hour eagerly commend the lesson, which requireth you in the most solemn and awful manner, which requireth you by the infinite love of God, by the unbounded compassion of Christ his son, to love and to do good to every creature within your power; how comes it that you will the next hour carelessly blacken the reputation of one of your fellow creatures, and by a thousand cruel arts unmercifully disturb the peace of many others? How comes it that you, who hear so frequently in the house of God, that all things on earth are ordered according to the righteous will of heaven, that chastisements are proofs of divine love, and that afflictions are sent by that infinite wisdom, which ordereth all things in weight and measure; how comes it that you who hear
all

all this, yet rebel so frequently against the will of God, if it suiteth not with your own wild inclinations? How comes it that you so unwillingly, and with such murmurings and complaints, resign to the God, who is above, any of those gifts, which he Himself has been pleased to give you? How comes it, that though every christian grace is so constantly recommended, yet we see every hateful vice as constantly practised? Whence comes all this, but from your neglecting to take heed how ye hear? You think the business is done when you have heard the instruction; whereas after that it is to begin. He that heareth not with humility, and practiseth with diligence, is an unhappy deceiver of his own soul. What does it avail you to come into this house of God, as to the performance of a task, persuading yourselves that you have done all that is required of you, if with an outward decency you pay a common attention to the instruction which is here given you? Only examine into the motives which generally bring you here: Is it not either a compliance with custom; or an opinion that it is your duty merely to hear the word of God explained? But
do

do you ever come, with an earnest desire to walk in the way pointed out to you; to perform the heavenly duties recommended? Do you come to hear the *preacher speak* of the love of God, and of the love of man His creature? Or do you come to have your hearts warmed with heavenly charity, that you may love the Lord your God with all your hearts, and your neighbour as yourselves? Experience doth indeed, most fatally shew us, for what men generally come here. After all the exhortations you have had to raise your affections on things above, many of you are still as much fixed on this world, as if you had been brought up in the ignorance of Paganism. Have you not reason, then, to take heed how you hear? Can you imagine, that hearing like this, is acceptable in the sight of God? The impression hardly remaineth on your hearts, as long as the sound continueth on your ears; you have no sooner left these walls, than the world, with all its naughty customs, runneth upon you; and the person who here put on the appearance of the attentive, teachable christian, is immediately found to be the unchanged obstinate sinner. Is

it

it not necessary now for you to take heed how you hear? With such dispositions as these, though the gospel was preached to you from morning to night, you would still disgrace it by your actions. No longer deceive yourselves; for thus to hear, is only to insult the God whom you *pretend*, and whom, I trust, you wish to honour; and better, far better, let me tell you, would it be for you, never to hear, than not to yield obedience to the word of life, when you have heard it.

Another kind of hearers there are, who with more shew of devotion, still receive as little profit from the word preached, as those that have been just described. The persons I mean, are those who have at times great appearance of seriousness; who receive the word with joy, and are delighted to make it the subject of their conversations; but in their time of temptation, in the hour of trial, are found to have no root, which shall bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God. Let God and the world come in competition with these people; let them be called upon to sacrifice much to that good God who gave them all, and then we often see how shamefully they have deluded them-

selfes; how he, who seemed to admire the self-denying doctrines of the gospel, who seemed to be all on fire with an holy zeal, when he heard that we were to forsake all, that we might become the poor, humble followers of a poor, humble Saviour; we then often see, that the mouth uttered what the heart did not feel; that it is most easy for those to talk, who yet are not willing to live like christians. How often do we see the speculative admirer of christian love, returning evil for evil, and railing for railing? Bring many of you, who now pretend great reverence to the sublimest christian doctrines, into those circumstances, where you are called upon to forgive injuries, great and unprovoked; where, like your great Lord, you are to pass by the insults of those to whom you have done good, and are to return them good for evil; and then let us see to what purpose is all your hearing. Alas! the experience of what we *have* seen, is too sad a proof of what we should again see. No sooner are you tempted, than in an instant all your gawdy religion vanishes, nature alone prevails, and is seen in all its strength, unsubdued by grace. But he alone heareth well,

well, who is thereby led to obtain the grace his teacher recommendeth. It is a surprising admiration of forgiveness, which the moment you have received an injury, leaveth you as full of anger and revenge, as prone to return it, as if the gospel required nothing at your hands, in such a case. Christian graces are for particular seasons; resignation for the bitter hour of adversity; forgiveness for the time when you have received an injury. And what will it avail you to be much resigned, when nothing is taken away from you; to be very forgiving when nobody has injured you? No: there is a season for the exertion of every grace, and if you have it not at that season, you have it not at all. This you may be well assured of; let therefore no zeal of words deceive you. Try whether you produce the fruit; whether you really have the graces you pretend to admire. Let the instance be, that very extensive one of christian love. Are you really charmed, when you hear this divinely described; when you hear it warmly recommended by one who is himself influenced by it; when you see its glorious effects painted in

lively and glowing colours? Does the description then warm your heart, and make you eager to speak of it to others? Yet build not too much even on these fair appearances. For should it afterwards be found, as it daily is, that you can hurt another, that you can trifle with your neighbour's reputation, and lessen him in the esteem of others, then you have not christian love. Whatever you may think of yourselves, your hearts are not converted; and though you could speak with the tongues of men and angels, and could fathom the deepest miseries; *still, still* you have no charity. Have you not reason then to take heed how you hear? For the end of hearing is practice; the end, the sole end of teaching is, obedience.

There is another sort of hearers, whom we cannot but take notice of, and they are those whom the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this world hinder from hearing aright.—These are very numerous: and the graces of christianity appear to them unattainable and imaginary. The man who is plunged in pleasure knows not how to think of finding his all in God; the man who

who is anxiously careful for the abundance of this world's wealth, knows not how to commit himself to that fatherly care, which supporteth the whole creation. These graces, and such as these, he will, perhaps, bear with an unmeaning patience recommended; and like those who we have before described, will think it sufficient that he *has* heard.

And as you are to avoid these dispositions in attending to the word of God, so are you also to avoid some others, which are by no means uncommon amongst you. Remember then, among other things, that it is your business to hear for *yourselves*, and not for *others*. It is nothing to you, what would suit your neighbour's case, what would do him good, if he would follow it. That is *his* business, not *yours*. Do you attend for your own benefit, avoid the evil pointed out, pursue the good recommended to you. It is to each of you, for your own sakes, that the teacher directeth his instructions to you; he meaneth not that you should apply them, but to yourselves. That is the only application that will promote the glory of God, and the good of man.

The last disposition which I shall caution you against, is that spirit of criticising and animadverting, which is much too common among you. It is not the intent of preaching to lay before you elaborate discourses, on which you are to exercise your little skill. The intention of the christian preacher is of a much higher and a deeper nature; he is to sound in your ears the eternal truths of God; to point out your folly in pursuing, as you do, the vanities of time, and neglecting the riches of eternity: he is to tell you, again and again, what one should think need not be told to children, of the shortness of life, and the solemn yet very secret judgments of God, which are to follow: he is to tell you, that with an almighty arm you cannot contend, therefore, thro' the whole of human life, reverence and fear the God who made, and will speedily judge you: this faithful monitor is to lay before you the pure and exalted life of a christian; he is to describe to you *charity* which knoweth no bounds, *humility* which knoweth no contempt of others, *renignation* which knoweth no self-will, *prayer* which knoweth no interruption; this he is to do with unwearied earnestness,

and

and then he must needs shew you the direct contrary of all this, which is just in general what our hearers are themselves. He is to found in your ears from day to day, your apostacy from the life of Christ; your retaining the *form*, and losing the *power* of godliness. He is to shew you the foul corruptions, which your self-love conceals from your own eyes, though directly contrary to the whole law of heaven. This is his business, and not to amuse you with the sound of words of no importance. It is not the province of a preacher to entertain your imagination, but to inform your judgment, to correct your will, to curb your passions, to restrain your *animal* nature, to strengthen your spiritual. Take heed, therefore, how you hear in this case: if you are disposed to *admire* your teacher, do it not by empty words, not by unmeaning commendations, but by walking in the way which he pointeth out to you. Immediately by your actions, to contradict the lesson, which you have commended by your words, is to condemn yourselves, out of your own mouths; is to make the mighty word of God, however forcibly recommended, however powerfully

erfully uttered, is still to make it all of no effect to your own salvation. If, on the other hand, as is much more likely, you are yourselves disposed to find fault with your instructor, to censure his want of beauty and ornament in what he speaks; remember, that it is his business to *reprove*, and not to *amuse* you. And at the same time do have humility enough just to recollect, how very unfit the bulk of you are for such a task. It is a work that, in general, by your education you are altogether disqualified for. When we speak from this place, we speak not for praise or reputation; was this our end, we should chuse another place, yea, and I must needs tell you, other hearers too. Do you then attend only to the one great business of hearing, which is to *follow* what you hear. The word preached is almighty and all-powerful: let it take root in your heart, and there is no vice, however obstinate, which it will not expel, there is no grace, however difficult, which it will not introduce. He who soweth it, by the ministry of his teachers, is the God of ages, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. If then you are not converted from sin to righteousness,

teousness, if you are not conformed to the holy life, and the glorious precepts of the blessed Jesus, it is all because you do not take heed how you hear. When you are told, that the light of heaven is given to every *desiring* christian, to expel the ignorance of nature, to supply him with the abundance of knowledge and truth, you then hear aright, if your heart is turned towards God, and ceaseth not to pray for this heavenly guide, till it is obtained.—Take heed then how you hear: let it not be to afford you matter for empty, unprofitable talking, but for real direction in the life of godliness. When you hear grace, and all its mighty effects described, pray for it, till you have obtained it: when you hear *faith* set forth as a living principle, changing and renewing the whole man, making those who possess it chearfully sacrifice earth to heaven, and time to eternity; when you hear *hope* exalted as the glorious gift of God, putting mortal man into a kind of possession of the joys of immortal angels; when you hear *charity* recommended in all its various branches, as the *breath* of God, as the very life and spirit of christian men, without which

which whosoever liveth, is, in the opinion of the God of love, dead, even while he liveth; then let not these holy lessons encrease your speculative opinions about faith, hope, and charity; but let your whole souls be possessed and renewed by a true, operative, christian faith; let your desires be warmed, exalted, and refined, by a lively, comfortable, christian hope; let all your actions be regulated by a sincere, tender, universal christian charity. Thus, in all cases, when you have heard, learn; when you have learned, obey; and by thus doing, thou shalt live.

Animated only with the tenderness of
 grace disarmed, his mercy triumphant.
 God appeared, his justice satisfied, his ven-
 creatures. He pronounced the wrath of
 from the Most High God, to his wretched
 he delivered the message of eternal mercy
 want, and was found in fashion as a man
 men and angels took on him the form of a
 to the Father of all, which the Creator of
 from

SER-

S E R M O N V.

L U K E vii. 36. 37. 38.

And one of the pharisees desired him, that he would eat with him. And he went into the pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold! a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears.

WHEN Jesus Christ descended from heaven to earth, when the creator of men and angels took on him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, he delivered the message of eternal mercy from the Most High God, to his wretched creatures. He pronounced the wrath of God appeased, his justice satisfied, his vengeance disarmed, his mercy triumphant. Animated only with the tenderness of
heaven,

heaven, he flew to the relief of every distress; he heard the sighs, and pitied the miseries of every sufferer. His sacred heart, full of love unfeigned, overflowed with such mighty pity, as set at nought the laws of the creation, and suspended the course of nature which himself had appointed, and which had continued fixed and immoveable from age to age, from generation to generation. The mournful prayers of the blind; the piteous moans of the dumb; the humble lamentations of the sick, in a manner *confounded* the blessed Jesus, and forced the Godhead to break forth in all its blaze of mercy and of majesty. — The tenderness shewed to the *bodies* of men, extended itself with still *greater* force to their souls. The tears of the fearful, ungrateful Peter, wiped out his apostacy, and procured him pardon and favour. The ambition of James and John, the aspiring sons of Zebedee, was blotted out of the divine account by their future humility. And the house in which we are now assembled, and the hearers, for whom the discourses here delivered are particularly intended, naturally turn our attention to the humble, afflicted, thankful
 finner,

*bold and
beautiful*

unguarded

shocking!

finner, celebrated in that portion of scripture, part of which I have just read to you.

Pious christians have, in all ages, experienced the divine depth of holy scripture. It is a powerful and living word, extending from age to age. It is not a bare relation of facts transacted in other times, and other places; but it is the great pattern of what has been transacting in every generation, since the holy Jesus ascended into the heavens above; it is the pattern of what is now doing on earth, and of what will continue to be doing till time shall be no more. The mercy of Jesus in heaven, is still equal to what he shewed on earth; his power still ready and able to assist the children of men that cry for help. With this view, I shall therefore now turn your eyes to the passage before us; a passage, like many others, breathing, as it were, the very spirit of this house, and holding out the choicest comforts of eternity to the finners that inhabit it; if those finners, with profound humility and ardent devotion, offer themselves up to God. The sacred historian informs us, “That
“a woman in the city, which was a sinner,
“when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in
“the

“ the pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster
 “ box of ointment, and stood at his feet
 “ behind him, weeping.” Behold the
 mighty operative effects of true repentance;
 of unfeigned contrition! This grievous
 sinner disregarded all the *common* forms
 of life, broke through all the restraints of
doubt this ordinary fashions. She had sinned, like
 you, against the God of Heaven; had
 stained her soul with the foulest crimes,
 such as have polluted yours; and, we trust,
is is impro- for a mixed congregation
 like you, had felt the horrid vengeance of
 the Almighty against her guilt; was then,
 perhaps, distracted with the fear, that the
 Judge of all the earth would the next mo-
 ment call her up to his awful tribunal, to
 give an account of the life he had bestowed
 upon her, and to render up to the awful,
 Sovereign Majesty of Heaven, a faithful
 enumeration of all her actions, whether they
 were good, or whether they were bad.
 Thus awakened from folly to reflection,
 from iniquity to fear and terror, she looked
 backwards and forwards. She called her
 own ways to remembrance. She saw she
 had forsaken the guide of her youth; that
 she had trampled on the wise instructions
 once

once received; had blasphemed the God she had been early taught to worship; had wantonly prophaned His sacred name, at which angels tremble; had openly lived as if there was no God in heaven, as if His sacred justice noted not the actions of men on earth. She saw the hateful pollution she had contracted; she saw the delicacy of her nature, in mercy conferred upon her sex in a superabundant manner, by her great Creator, vanished and changed into a rude, foul course of manners, forgetful even of the common decency of common society. She saw, in this sad review, her tenderness of disposition gone. Originally more merciful than man, more affected with tales of sorrow, more interested in the many afflictions that happen in this sad world; weeping more with those that weep; thus originally framed, and adorned with all the softness of human nature, she saw it totally changed into an unfeeling hardness, into a savage fierceness; fiercer than the lion in the forest; making a mock of sorrows, and sporting at calamities. Mad as it were, with passions unrestrained, and inflamed by the foul examples of those with whom

who
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the
Author
all
this?

whom she conversed, she saw herself, that was destined to the regions of immortal happiness, to shine in the unspotted purity of angels; she saw herself polluted by every crime, abandoned to every iniquity. If she had as yet abstained from any offence, the step thereto, even to the blackest, was easy and unperceivable. Lust unrestrained has no feelings of compassion, trembles at no murder; for it has no ear open to mercy. All is disorder and wildness; and in this lamentable confusion of human nature, crime succeeds to crime, till death closes the scene with all its horrid terrors; or till conviction and repentance possess the affrighted soul with all the horrors of that offended justice which reigns and rules in the heavens above. Happily for this eminent offender, for this eminent saint, she fell into the latter circumstances; she saw her crimes, she was humbled for her transgressions; she reformed her life. In the bloom of youth, in the strength of years, (for so much tradition has preserved of her,) she forsook the iniquity of her ways, and fled with horror and affright from the paths of death, into which she had early entered.

A great

A great and profitable example she stands forth to you of this house. *Where was this delivered? was it in a Magdalen Asylum?* Your beginnings are like her's. Like *her* you have offended: like *her*, you have early begun the work of repentance. Jesus Christ accepted *her* on earth; and he has now in the depth of his mercy, accepted you in heaven. He hath opened this house of retirement, solitude, and devotion for your reception. Here may you, like the afflicted Mary, repent and weep, and pray. But as you have begun like *her*, like *her* you must proceed. Her conduct is minutely described, that you may minutely follow it. Let us proceed in the account, which is written for your admonition; and may that eternal spirit, who at first formed, and hath since reformed your minds, may He have mercy on you, and write all these his instructions in your hearts! We are told of this repentant sinner, that she brought an alabaster box of ointment, declaring thereby the high reverence she had of him whom she approached; proclaiming that his righteousness was beyond the richest perfume; that his holiness ascended up to heaven, more grateful than the sweetest incense that burnt upon the

altar. Thus proclaiming his worth, she came, and with equal energy she announced her own unworthiness. Behold the humility of her approach, and let every step she takes inform you, with what reverence sinners should approach their immaculate Saviour, and their all-righteous Judge: "She stood at his feet;" in the humblest and the lowliest situation; oppressed with her guilt, she durst advance no farther. He had called sinners to repentance, and she came in the bitterness of repentance. Oppressed with her guilt, and with the fear of punishment due to that guilt, she came to sue for mercy; yet the mighty conviction of her own crimes overwhelmed her; the unspotted purity of her Saviour confounded her. Though she stood but at his feet, yet observe, "She stood at his feet, *behind* him." His full, direct presence, seems more than she can bear; though in the agony of her tears she comes to petition for mercy, she yet dreads his righteousness; she yet trembles at his justice. When the soul is truly convinced of sin, no words can express the terrors it feels, the guilt it discovers, the shame that overwhelms it, the humility that

that possesses it. Thus we see it was, in the first description given of this distressed penitent, which advances still farther in the painting of her godly sorrow; for "She stood at his feet, behind him, weeping."

All in this mournful sinner was grief, and sorrow of heart; was shame and confusion of face. She was brought into so great trouble and misery, that she went mourning all the day long. Her silence was the loudest prayer; her tears the most pathetic call for pity. Though her tongue was dumb through the horrors that surrounded her, yet her heart cried out to the holy Jesus, as she remained at his feet behind him, weeping:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness: according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me." During her continuance in this holy presence, the sorrows of her heart were enlarged, and would have utterance. She wept in that abundance, that she washed the feet of the holy Jesus with her tears. And then

*Exquisitely
beautiful*

ashamed, as it were, that one so impure should touch the fountain of all purity, and of all perfection, she wiped his sacred feet again; and again anointed them with ointment. Behold the wonderful nature of true repentance, of profound humility. You inhabitants of this house, who have sinned after the likeness of her transgression, make haste to imitate her in the greatness of this her repentance, in the depth of this her humility. You can present yourselves before God in solitude and prayer, during this your holy retirement live for ever in his presence. Call your own corruptions to remembrance; and penetrated with the lowliest humility, offer yourselves up to God, as creatures that have forsaken His righteous ways; that have provoked His sacred justice; that have made a mock of His tender mercy. Cry aloud, and spare not; and you will then find your Saviour ready to present your petitions, and to surround you with his eternal mercy. But you *must* be earnest; you *must* persevere. Fits of devotion, and a cool tameness in prayer, are but ill expressions of a sense of guilt like yours. Where the soul feels much,

much; it will, it must express much, even by outward signs. The mind of man, much agitated within, cannot, from its nature, appear perfectly calm without. I mean not to recommend an outrageous extravagance of manner to you; but the warmest devotion, the profoundest humility, the most earnest supplication for mercy, and the most submissive, patient expectation, till the blessed moment when that mercy shall be showed, these must be recommended to you; these must be enforced upon you; for they are the only things that will answer the end of your separation from the world; these things, and these alone, will make this house to you the house of God, and this place the gate of heaven.

For your encouragement in the great work of repentance which you have begun, we will proceed to offer to your cool consideration, a few observations on the remaining part of the passage before us. We are told, that when the pharisee, who had bidden him, saw what was done, he saw the humility of the sinner, and the condescension of the Saviour, "He spake within himself, saying, this man, if he were a

“ prophet, would know who, and what
 “ manner of woman this is which toucheth
 “ him : for she is a sinner.” Blessed Jesus !
 thou wast a prophet, and the teacher of
 prophets. Thou knewest who, and what
 manner of woman it was that touched thee.
 Thou knewest that she was a sinner. But
 if thou art extreme to mark what is done
 amiss, O Lord, who can abide it ? Which
 of thy creatures could then appear in thy
 sacred presence ; or presume to lift up their
 eyes to that righteous throne on which thou
 fittest ! But there is mercy with thee ; and
 in that mercy alone is comfort for the sons
 of Adam, for all are sinners. But thou
 hearest the prayers ; thou notest the tears ;
 thou sealest the pardon ; thou removest the
 weakness of repenting sinners ; and such
 an one was then prostrate at thy feet !

And here we must observe, with what
 disdain notorious sinners are often treated
 by those who, being clear from remarkable
 outward crimes, value themselves on their
 own righteousness. With such persons
 the world has ever abounded. Our own
 age, (as well as former times,) is full of
 them. These ignorant judges of human
 nature,

nature, puffed up with an imperfect survey of the state of man, neither judge aright of themselves or others. They neither see the corruptions with which their own hearts abound; the important duties they themselves neglect; the small progress they make in exalted devotion and heavenly charity; nor do they see through what mighty temptations others often fall; destitute of what helps, they gradually plunge from crime to crime. All in these self-deluded fools, is a proud triumph over the weaknesses of others; is an over-weening opinion of themselves for imaginary excellencies, for unreal virtues. Such as these, in the days of our Lord, were angry that a sinner should be allowed to touch him. Such as these, in our own days wonder, that this house of mercy should be open to miserable offenders. But both the mournful Mary and the penitent inhabitants of this house, have cried to their Saviour for mercy, and he hath had mercy upon them. Though the ignorance of man may treat you with contempt, yet your hope is in heaven, which will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. The Almighty himself will
plead

plead the cause of *real* penitents. Observe how He has already pleaded yours, who are truly sorrowful for your sins. Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto him, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. See with what tender regard your acts of penitence will be remembered by the holy Jesus! The tears you shed will not fall unnoted to the ground; the prayers you offer up will ascend into the highest heaven,

heaven, and be recorded there; and the sighs you pour forth shall be had in everlasting remembrance; and the Saviour of the world will hold them forth in your behalf, in the presence of men and angels. Ye who have imitated this sinner in her crimes; who have begun to imitate her in her repentance; and who, I trust, will imitate her in the fulness of her sacred sorrow, in the high perfection of her holy change, observe her triumph, and see her carry away the crown of everlasting life from the Judge of all the earth. Hear his joyful sentence, pronounced as if he sat on the seat of judgment; "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many," (many as yours,) "are forgiven: for she loved much." But as those who grieve for sins are *fearful*, he will therefore pronounce her pardon in form, addressed directly to herself: "And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven thee." But of the divine forgiveness there must be no doubt; the peace of God must be perfect and established beyond a power of interruption. The Redeemer of the world will pour the *richest* fulness of his comfort and serenity, into the soul that waiteth

waiteth on him. When therefore " they
 " that sat at meat with him, began to say
 " within themselves, who is this that for-
 " giveth sins also? He said to the woman,"
 in the fulness of his eternal power, " thy
 " faith hath saved thee: go in peace."
 Thus was her pardon sealed. The sentence
 pronounced on earth was ratified in heaven;
 and the whole host of heaven looked down,
 and rejoiced over this repenting sinner,
 more than over ninety and nine just persons
 who need no repentance. Thus did they
 rejoice over her, during the rest of her pil-
 grimage here on earth; where she wept,
 and prayed, and rejoiced, till she had run
 her course below; when her body returned
 in holy hope to the earth, from whence it
 was taken; and her purified, exalted soul
 ascended to the region of immortal spirits,
 where it now shines in purity equal to the
 purest saint; in brightness equal to the
 brightest angel: and from this eminence of
 glory, she looks down with angelic tenderness
 on you of this house, and clothed in all
 her eternal splendour, she cries, " Be ye fol-
 " lowers of me, even as I was of Christ:
 " Go, and do you like me."

SER-

SERMON VI

PHILIPPIANS II. 5.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

IT has in all ages been observed of the gospel of Christ, that it breaths the very spirit of tenderness and charity. All its precepts tend to soften and enlarge the heart. Sublime, however, as these directions are, they receive infinite force from the holy example of Him who gave them. He more than fulfilled them all himself, and commands that you should follow the high example which he has left you. To excite you to the great work, I shall at present make a few observations on some actions of our Lord's life, which display his divine mercy, for your imitation, hoping that you may be led thereby to cultivate the tenderness which you cannot but admire, hoping that the same

mind may be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. — The various miracles which Jesus Christ wrought, to relieve the distresses of mankind, are each of them, an abundant proof of the heavenly tenderness of his heart. He was no sooner solicited to exert his sacred power to heal the sick, than his word went forth and healed them. But for our instruction several particulars are at different times recorded, that shew the tenderness of the blessed Jesus, which you ought to pray may be planted in your own breasts. Thus, on the death of Lazarus, we are not barely told, that he commanded him to rise from the grave to life again, and that the grave in an instant gave back its prisoner: this record would have established the awful power of the Saviour whom we follow, but it would have ended there. We must have bowed before Him, whom we could not imitate. It would indeed have nourished our holy hope, that He, in whose hands are the keys of life and death, who restored life to Lazarus dead and buried, would in the fullness of time again exert this sacred power, and call us forth from the darkness of death to the life immortal. But see the goodness
of

of the mighty Jesus. See what a cloud he throws around the power he is going to exert, lest it should overwhelm and confound the beholders. Observe the circumstances that attend this miracle. "When Jesus saw the sister of Lazarus weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." He caught the sorrows of those around him, and closed not his heart to the griefs of others. "Then he said, where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." Thus was he softened with the miseries of mortal man, whose life thus ends in darkness; whose powers of every kind are thus distinguished in weakness. Seeing the havock that sin has made in the works of the Almighty; seeing the miseries it has spread through the whole creation; seeing in his comprehensive view all the successive generations of men perishing by the like sad fate; seeing us that now live, and all that shall hereafter live, alike the prisoners of death with the departed Lazarus; when he saw this, he groaned, and was troubled, and wept. He felt the miseries of that nature, to which he had united himself;

fell; and made for ever holy that sweet and
 blessed sorrow, which is felt for the afflictions
 of others. By the same divine spirit was he
 animated, when he raised to life the widow's
 son. In general he displayed not his power,
 till it was acknowledged; till the faith of the
 suppliant had declared him to be the hope
 of Israel. He waited till they wanted him.
 But in this case he prevented the sufferer.
 He revered her sorrows, and broke thro'
 all restraints to bless her. Observe how
 minutely those melancholy circumstances
 are described, which thus transported the
 holy Jesus. "When he came near to the
 " gate of the city, behold! there was a dead
 " man carried out, the only son of his mo-
 " ther, and she was a widow." Observe
 the miseries of this afflicted person! She had
 heretofore lost the husband that protected
 her; on whose affection she had depended
 for peace and comfort. This natural pro-
 tector she had already lost; and had only,
 to supply this loss, a son whom from his in-
 fancy she had reared with the gentle consid-
 eration of a mother's care. His father's death
 had made him sacred in her eyes; and must
 have added much to that which in general
 admits

admits of no addition, the tenderness of a mother for an only child. This child she saw with raptures advancing into manhood, and already arrived at that state, when he was to return with filial piety the tender kindness he had received; when he was to shower down the choicest blessings of time on the declining years of a fond, affectionate mother. In the opening bloom of life is he too snatched away, and the astonished parent left to all the horrors of grief and despair. But the holy Jesus had directed his steps to this house of mourning. Her silent trouble, too great for utterance, moved the almighty power of divine charity; and "when he saw her he had compassion on her." Hurried away, as it were, by divine pity, he over-rides the laws of nature to relieve her, and by his divine power recalls the dead to life, and restores him to his transported mother. Now though the power of man is limited, yet do you cultivate the blessed disposition, which led to this display of the divine power. Follow the bright example which he has left you. Learn to reverence the sorrows of others, and measure their troubles by your own feelings.

There

There is hardly a disposition more calculated for human comfort than this, now forcibly recommended by our Lord's example. Human life, in every condition, is exposed to a thousand troubles. All of those about us have their sorrows and afflictions; there are seasons in life, when those, who may be called the happiest, are ready to perish under the load of their distresses; while others, in outward circumstances still less favoured by heaven, drag on a life of suffering, hardly interspersed even with a few days of comfort. To alleviate this universal wretchedness, the gospel calls upon its professors to cultivate, with the utmost care, the disposition of tenderness for others. It commands you to suppose yourselves in their situation, and to weep with those that weep. It holds out to your view Jesus Christ as your great pattern, not harshly treating the afflicted, but silently and reverently approaching them, and piously blending his tears with theirs. That hard austerity, which affects to exalt itself above all sensibility, is not the disposition calculated for a world of suffering; is not the *ornament*, but the sad *disgrace*, and lowest depravity of our nature.

Do

Do you contrariwise treasure up mercy for yourselves against the day when mercy shall be wanted. Afford pity to others, and you yourselves shall be pitied; relieve, and you shall be relieved; comfort those that now want it, and you yourselves shall be abundantly comforted by the God of all mercy, in that awful season, the hour of death, when every earthly power must fail you; and when the light of heaven alone can afford peace and consolation to your departing soul; going it knows not where; to enter on it knows not what. Let us now turn our eyes to the holy Jesus in other instances, and let us see him on different occasions discovering this same tenderness for mankind. When he came to preach his truths on earth, he came to deliver the lessons of eternal wisdom; to command those precepts which lead to happiness. Yet see with what *gentleness* even this great work is done; with what *condescension* to the weakness of his hearers. He does not harshly say, this is truth and must be heard, and must be received; this the will of God, and must be followed. He knows the weakness of men; in doctrines, he knows the force of

prejudice bias duties, in the mighty influence
 of evil habits. He proportions himself,
 therefore, to their weakness. When he is
 asked, why he does not enjoin fasting and
 abstinence to his disciples, as the Pharisees
 do to theirs; he informs them by several
 parabolical allusions, that even holiness
 must be taught by degrees; that you must
 never expect from any what they are as yet
 unable to perform. The excellence of
 what is taught, is not barely to be attended
 to, but the capacity of the disciple to hear
 and receive it. This he illustrates by several
 expressive images, and the tenderness of his
 own conduct is recorded to complete it.
 Here then again, follow the example of your
 Lord: submit to the weaknesses of others
 patiently; and wait till God, who alone can
 do it, sees fit to remove them. What your
 brother cannot receive now, he may receive
 hereafter. God, who gave him his capacity,
 may enlarge it; who gave him his passions,
 may correct them. The pattern of all per-
 fection, has shewed you how to conduct
 yourselves in such cases: when the Sama-
 ritan wanted information, the holy Jesus
 gave it; when he wanted assistance, he
 afforded

afforded it. He did not plead the errors of his faith, nor the corruptions with which he had defaced the truths of God, as an argument for withholding assistance from him. Do you fashion yourselves on this example. If your neighbour has, in your opinion, corrupted the truths of heaven by the doctrines he holds, still do him all the good you can. Your opinions are not more sacred than those unerring truths taught by the Saviour of the world; yet he waited till men could receive them. He did not dazzle them with doctrines too splendid, with precepts too sublime. He led them on by degrees, waiting till the spirit of God enabled them to receive the truths of God. Do you tread in his steps. Let the errors of the church of Rome no way embitter your hearts against the members of it. Recollect the force of prejudice long rooted; and the weakness of the mind of man in general. God, who gave it but such limited powers, will in no wise demand more than he has given. It is your bounden duty to shower down blessings upon them, as if they were not in error. A violence which leads you to deny assistance to those

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who

who want it, because of the errors they hold, is not the righteousness of God, but the pride and stubbornness of the heart of man, which cannot brook opposition; which sets itself up as the standard of truth, and is offended by contradiction. Where we see mankind inflamed against each other for difference in opinions, we then see the utmost weakness of our nature. And yet how wretchedly has this spirit prevailed in the church of Christ? Doctrines have been proposed and expounded by men of inflamed imaginations, of violent tempers, of pride not to be gainsaid; and if the quiet hearer has not done homage to these crude, unimportant notions, the foundations of the gospel itself have been represented as in danger; and the eternal spirit of charity, which never dies, which never ceases, its holy operations in righteous souls, has been extinguished by these mad teachers of human doctrines, which have usurped the place of divine truths. Animated by this rash spirit, these furious zealots rush into the holy of holies as into a common place; they treat of every heavenly secret as thoroughly open to their inspection: truths, for what we know,

know, too exalted for the minds of angels, they scrutinise with prophane freedom, and tremble not to speak with unhallowed lips of the most adorable, reverential mysteries of the Godhead. And from their childish determinations lies no appeal; as they represent it, the whole beauty of the gospel consists in their fancies; the whole strength of that eternal system rests on their notions. From this unbounded *notional* pride, there is but one step to the most unbounded *practical* cruelty. Hence it follows, that churches thunder out anathemas and excommunications against churches; sects set themselves in battle array against sects; and the temples of the meek and holy Jesus resound with the lessons of ignorance, cruelty and prophaneness. To guard against this prevailing corruption, "Let the same spirit of humility, and forbearance, which was in Christ Jesus, be also in you." Pity the errors of your neighbours, but do them good, just as if they were as wise as angels. The doctrine that extinguishes your charity is the doctrine of pride and ignorance, not of the divine and gracious Jesus; whose unbounded mercy blesses the whole creation,

and alike protects the Jew and Gentile.—But the compassion of him, whom you are to imitate, is not confined to errors in opinion only. It extends itself to the most enormous corruptions of practice. All pure and holy in himself, he yet pities and pardons impurity and unrighteousness in mankind. The rapacious Matthew, and the woman taken in adultery, all experienced the force of that divine charity, which nothing can extinguish. He knew the unhappy corruption of human nature, and wished to correct, not insult it. He cherished the first and earliest motions of repentance; and waited for them patiently where they did not yet appear. Here then, tread in the steps of your Lord, who has gone before you. For the exercise of this spirit you have daily need. Men, constantly transgressing, are constantly in want of your indulgence. Their unbridled passions violate the righteous laws of heaven, and make them objects of your pity and compassion. But this, that affords such abundant matter for your charity, will, if you are not careful, nourish your pride. The weakness of your fellow-creatures, sometimes leads you to over-rate
your

your own strength. But guard against this error: when others transgress the laws of God, do you set before your eyes the mercy of your all perfect Saviour. See how he pitied and pardoned. Let his merciful spirit possess your breasts, and influence every thought of your hearts. Pity the failings of others, and compassionate them as the errors of an imperfect state, through which men must needs pass to perfection. When they fall, reflect how you yourselves have fallen heretofore; and procure mercy from God, by shewing it to man. Open your hearts to the tenderest sentiments of an enlarged compassion, and like your righteous Saviour, humbly hope, and earnestly pray, that in the fulness of time, through the profound wisdom of the divine dispensations, sinners may be exalted into saints, and the imperfect sons of men into the perfect sons of God.

Thus, in all cases, has the Son of God walked before you in the way that leads to perfection and peace. He has shewed you that holiness alone is the road to happiness. Contemplate then, this sacred pattern of perfection, till you imitate him; behold

hold him, till you become like him; so shall your faithful services here lead you to an eternity of glory hereafter; so shall your short sufferings on earth conduct you to those immortal splendors, which adorn the saints and angels of the Most High.

S E R M O N VII.

LUKE IX. 54. 55. 56.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

SUCH is the present corruption of mankind, that, instead of blessing, they seem to delight in every opportunity of disturbing the peace of their fellow-creatures. The whole world is one continued scene of cruel power, and suffering weakness. Human strength and authority, whether it be great or whether it be small, is commonly exerted to the ruin and plague of those within its reach. So narrow and confined is the heart of man, that it hardly feels but
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for its own private advantage: it is shut up within the circle of self, and loses all tenderness and compassion when it looks towards others. Hence arises all that misery which disturbs and disorders public and private, civil and religious life. 'Tis this that often looses all the bonds of natural affection, and makes each man rage against his neighbour. 'Tis this that makes us severe and unforgiving, and that raises every trifling offence into a crime not to be pardoned. 'Tis this that has many times unpeopled mighty nations, and that has shamefully made a pure and sacred religion the pretence for the most outrageous barbarities. Depraved and sunk as human nature is, and frequently thirsting after the blood of others, it artfully covers over this wretched disposition, with the fair disguise of zeal for religion and truth. The cause of the most high God is represented as in danger, and the name of Jesus Christ as wickedly opposed. Thus is heaven brought to countenance the wrath of man, and He who is all love and tenderness, is impiously represented as sitting on high, and delighting in the sufferings of us on earth. Thus the foul and black dispositions,

positions, by which the heart of man is possessed, are coloured over and sanctified, and are authorised to disperse death and misery through many a wretched country. It may, at first, perhaps, seem strange to many, that man should be so far corrupted as to sport with the misery of his fellow creatures; that he should be so depraved, as to hear the cries and groans of his brethren, and yet increase their misery and add to their affliction. But dark as this representation of nature is, it is yet the truth. We see an instance of it, in some degree, in the passage from whence I have taken the words I have read to you. The young disciples of our Lord were eager to vindicate their master's honour, and were impatient to punish the Samaritans, who had refused to receive him into their houses. Little did they, at that time, unenlightened by the gospel of peace, know the errand on which the Son of God was pleased to come into this world. And as little do they know of it still, who would destroy or hurt men's bodies to benefit their souls; who would represent the glorious universal Saviour of the world as the destroyer of mankind.

And

And yet, alas! how frequently is this done, to the great dishonour of the christian name, to the everlasting reproach of thousands, who thereby blaspheme the adorable name of God. Look but into the christian world with the smallest degree of attention, see there how one man treats another, through all the various kingdoms of the earth; and afterwards compare this conduct with the proceedings of our blessed Lord, and the truly christian spirit, and you will then see how wretchedly we have apostatised from the gospel truth; how we have changed the heavenly spirit of love and meekness, into the hateful temper of bitterness and cruelty; what has been the history of almost every age, but an account of the most horrid murders committed; of the most barbarous torments inflicted; and all as was pretended to serve the cause of the most high God. Men have dared to add inventions of their own to the gospel purity; and then have suffered none to doubt, or call in question these human imaginations. The lives of men have been audaciously trifled with, and the very teachers and priests of Christ's religion, have washed their garments of holiness

holiness in the blood of those, for whom their heavenly Master vouchsafed to lay down his life. Church has been set up against church, and nation put in battle array against nation, because one denied a doctrine the other held. From the very temples of the living God has been sounded forth this diabolical spirit of party religion; and from the very altars have they run to rebellion and murder. What has been universally heard of, but the church of Rome madly fighting against other churches; and other churches with little less fury opposing her? Trifling doctrines and insignificant ceremonies have, ere now, turned some of our own countries into fields of blood, and armed the hand of the child against his parent. Instead of rooting out the fierceness and barbarity of nature, we have made religion a cloak for cruelty of every kind. In short, christendom from end to end, has been stained and polluted with the blood of christians, shed by the hands of christians. And in places and times where this hateful spirit has not proceeded to blood, yet there has it many times violated the peace of human society, and

and been the careful nurse of dislike and hatred. What animosity, what contempt, what unkindness does christian frequently harbour against christian? Sects and denominations are taught to brand each other with marks of infamy, and to withhold that love and kindness, which it is the christian's indispensable business to shed abroad on all mankind. Names of reproach have been invented to torment thousands who humble themselves before their God; and for fear the next generation should come nearer to the meekness and sweetness of true religion, we take care to poison the minds of infants with this very same bitterness; with this filthy narrowness of heart; that for malice and hatred, bitterness and cruelty may succeed from generation to generation, even while the world shall stand. Thus has the christian religion been misrepresented and blackened, till its enemies have given out, that it naturally sows discord and sedition amongst men; and roots out those tender affections, which adorn human nature, and bless mankind. The common professors have, 'tis true, given but too much reason for
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for this vile calumny. For look no farther than the lives of christians, and you would think tenderness and humanity were not in the list of christian graces. You would think the gospel closed the heart, put a sword into the hand, and curses into the mouth. How often have the lips, that should inculcate peace, scattered plagues and vengeance through a country; and dared to trifle with the eternal happiness of mankind, and horribly pronounce the sentence of everlasting misery on an immortal soul. 'Tis this corruption that has given occasion to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme that holy name, whereby we are called. And, what is much worse, 'tis from this that even christians are led to think, that they may be bitter and severe to their brethren, and hate those whom they are bound to love. But to see how the gospel abhors this wretched disposition, and forbids cruelty, though but in the lowest and least degree, let us cast our eyes on the conduct and precepts of our blessed Lord, whereby we shall see how he himself acted towards mankind, how he taught and commanded those that followed him to act also. The
107 Son

Son of man came indeed not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Overflowing with love and goodness, he came here among us, that he might give strength to them that were weak, peace to them that were disturbed, and life to them that were dead. He came to scatter every blessing, light, life, and happiness through the whole creation. He came not, as he justly might, cloathed in divine vengeance, and armed with all the instruments of justice; he came, not as a guilty wicked world had reason to expect, to judge and to punish; but to proclaim peace to them that were far off, and to them that were near. He came as the glorious, gracious, universal Saviour, as the angel of the covenant of love. He wished, and oh, may what *He* wished be one day accomplished! that none should die, but that all should repent and live. He came among us, to be to every man what every man should want; to purge and purify the mind from tumultuous, sordid passions; to establish an inward peace in the heart, that flourishes alike in outward prosperity and adversity; to take away the sting of death, and to open again the gates of the
paradise

paradise of God. No words can paint the gracious, merciful end of his incarnation, nor describe the love that exceeds all bounds. All we can say, to give an idea of this divine and sacred charity is, that he came to change earth into heaven, and men into angels of God. And look a little farther now and see, how he was pleased to conduct himself here on earth, when he came to accomplish this blessed purpose, this great and favourite plan of the all-perfect God-head. He railed not at sinners, nor insulted over those that were in error. He called not for vengeance on the guilty, but pointed out to them the way that leads to peace. Wherever he saw misery there he pitied; he lamented over Jerusalem that was to destroy him, as a man over his friend; and he sighed, and groaned, and wept, to see the wretched lot of mankind, when he mourned over Lazarus dead and buried. He despised not the lowest of mankind, nor distinguished between the rich and poor, between the noble and ignoble. As the Almighty had, from the creation of the world, made his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; as he had sent his rain from

heaven on the just and unjust; so did this his Son pursue, with love and goodness, the vilest and most abandoned sinners. His ears were open to all that cried for help, and it was his meat and drink to banish misery from among the children of men. For them he lived a life of poverty and shame, of pain and wretchedness, and died like the vilest malefactor: for them he breathed his last most glorious wish, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do: for them too he rose again from the dead; ascended into heaven; and now intercedeth at the throne of grace for us, and for all mankind. Judge now, I pray you, whether the Son of man did not come to save men's lives, and not to destroy them; and judge too, whether that man knows what manner of spirit he is of, who would destroy or hurt those lives, that Christ thus came to save. Christians must be directed, or they are no christians, by the same spirit of mercy and goodness, of love and gentleness, which reigned and ruled in Christ. You must, in all your thoughts, words, and works, carry on the great design of saving mens lives, and making them happy. This
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is the one great end for which the Son of God came into the world; and it is that which he now gives in charge to all his faithful followers, to promote with all their strength and all their might. Every injury that can be committed against yourselves you must forgive and overlook. Let none of those for whom Christ died be hurt by you; for this would be to fight openly against heaven, and to oppose the divine counsels. Forgive, just as you yourselves hope to be forgiven; and harbour no evil in your thoughts against them whom the laws of God command you to embrace with tenderness. And as you are thus to root out all bitterness and cruelty for injuries done to yourselves, so must you take care not to cover over your want of love and charity, under the specious pretence of care for religion, and zeal for the glory of God. Doubt not but the Almighty can vindicate his own cause; He needs not your assistance, nor will He have it. You are too much blinded by prejudice and passion, are too weak and ignorant, to be fit judges on such occasions. Your business is, to love your neighbour as yourself, be he of this or

that communion ; not to entertain hard or cruel thoughts concerning him, but to do him all the good you can, and to leave him and his errors, whatever they are, to that good and upright Judge, who seeth and knoweth the heart. Charity is the genuine principle, the only director of the christian's mind. Like his heavenly Master, he forgives all that want forgiveness ; he from his heart pities those that are the objects of compassion, and disperses blessings, as far as the weakness of his nature will permit.— Look now into your own hearts, and see how far they are possessed by this spirit of christian love. All bitterness and dislike is the work of corrupt nature, not of grace. It is the sourness of your own tempers, though you may perhaps call it christian zeal. But be assured it has nothing to do with christianity. For this is meek, loving, and compassionate ; doing good to all within its power ; wishing good to all that live. If it be your lot then, to be placed among those who, in your opinion, corrupt the truth of God by their doctrines, shew to them all love and tenderness, or you will much more fatally corrupt it by your practice.

tice. Remember the great end of the creation is and can only be, to bless mankind ; let not then religion be so far profaned, and turned away from its great intention, as to be made the cause of their misery. But let it evermore be your business, as it is now your wisdom, and will one day be your happiness, to make the gospel of Christ, according to the angel's prediction, promote the glory of God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

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 first, to make the gospel of truth, and
 the angels' prediction, promise, the
 glory of God in the highest, and on
 earth, good will towards men.

S E R M O N VIII.

MATTHEW 26. 35.

Peter said unto him, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

IT has in all ages been a constant custom to instruct by example. A method well calculated to *animate* those precepts, which are meant to convey wisdom and knowledge. When divine virtues are displayed in the actions of *one*, who bears our own nature, we feel ourselves incited to run after him whom we admire; and to regulate our own conduct by an example, which warms us, while we contemplate it! The abstract notions of what is right may release us, but discouragements therefrom occurring, we are apt to conclude, that such sublime speculations are hardly fitted for practice. Our lofty ideas vanish before substantial temptations; and comforting ourselves with equal weaknesses in those, amongst whom we live,

live, we sit down contented with the want of every grace; without the exercise of any virtue, which our station requires. But when example is held out to us, when we see one like ourselves rising superior to the weaknesses of others, we then feel that virtue is made for action; and we are ashamed to plead the force of those temptations, which others have withstood. Saints were made so from sinners; they had passions like yours to oppose; they had likewise graces, such as you want, to acquire. The virtues which shone in them were no more natural to *them*, than they are to you. They had pride like yours to pluck up, before they could become humble; they had a love of the world, equal to that which possesses *you*, to root out, before they could devote themselves to God. In a word, whatever you *are* they *were* before their conversion; till the eternal spirit, which offers to teach you and is rejected, was accepted by them, and led them into that way of righteousness and peace.—And as good examples do thus incite us to their imitation, bad ones offer us an equal advantage, though of another kind, by shewing

ing us the *consequence* of what is evil. They make futurity in a manner present to us; and when they shew us how woefully others have suffered by forsaking God, they shew us our own misery if we do not repent; for the decree of heaven is unalterable against the sinner, and equal vices must from the impartial hand of God bring down equal punishments.—Much might be offered to your consideration on this subject with good profit; but at present I turn myself from general reflections to the particular instance in my text. The conduct of that eminent saint and servant of God stands forth as a conspicuous warning to every age. It affords matter of abundant instruction to the different conditions of those that hear me this day. It is an awful warning to those who think they stand, to take heed lest they fall. It shews in strongest colours, the weakness of human nature; and proclaims to us, that our safety consists only in *humility*. To the inhabitants of this house it affords much solid consolation. It shews these wretched sinners, (what they have themselves experienced,) that their God and Saviour is merciful even to crimes of
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the blackest guilt ; it shews them that true repentance restores the sinner to God ; that the tears of godly sorrow are accepted by heaven ; and that profane apostates may in the end become teachers of everlasting righteousness. I shall therefore throw together some considerations on the conduct of Peter, in these *last* sufferings of *his* and *our* Redeemer ; sufferings which at all times demand your most serious attention ; but which at this season, when those holy sufferings were sustained for our sakes, seem to claim a more peculiar attention. And I hope that the example of this celebrated apostle may instruct you even here, in this dark scene of cowardice and ingratitude, as well as in the brightest display of his unshaken fortitude, and holy love.—The first thing that offers itself to our thoughts, on this subject, is the tender warning his Master gave him of his approaching danger. “ Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” A warning, one should think, sufficient to have alarmed, and to have secured him ! And equal warning does the teacher of mankind still communicate

nicate to his creatures. By his secret, but mighty influences on your souls, unknown to all but yourselves, does he impress upon your minds, from time to time, the danger of your conduct. His admonitions to you are as plain as those to Peter. Disguised in Galilee in the form of a servant, or seated in majesty by the eternal throne of God, he is still the same guide of human souls; he still points out the way that leads to happiness. Crimes great and terrible are not committed without inward horror; without again and again stifling the motions of the eternal spirit within us. He disturbs you with apprehensions; he distracts you with fears and terrors. Against crimes great and small the Almighty *within* you remonstrates; and warns you not to rush on misery with your eyes open. Against these awful admonitions, and merciful warnings of the Almighty, have you inhabitants of this house grievously transgressed. Though you have ventured on from vice to vice, and have advanced with boldness in the paths of iniquity, yet against what inward convictions have you offended? The terrors of the Lord have again and again
alarmed

alarmed your inmost souls; and you have been made to tremble for the dangers that threatened you, when the shocking miseries of wretched sinners, like yourselves, have offered themselves as horrible examples of divine vengeance against the crimes that solicited you. But with difficulty does man learn wisdom. Hardly is he restrained from following the suggestions of his different passions, however solemnly warned against them. Thus it fared with Peter. All the use he made of his Lord's admonition was to boast of his own strength: "Peter said unto him, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." The repeated evidences which our Lord had given of his divine mission; the miracles which he had performed, equal proofs of his unbounded mercy, as well as of his mighty power; the sublime and exalted truths which he had brought down from heaven, to enlighten his disciples; all this heavenly blaze of glory, which surrounded the holy Jesus; all this persuaded Peter, that it was impossible to deny so good and gracious a Lord. But ever remember, that *security* is not fit for man. You are not wise in *confidence*,
but

but in *humility* and *fear*. How often have we seen the fairest soul, in process of time, stained with the foulest corruptions; and the purest mind polluted with the most tremendous crimes? What has happened to others *may* also happen to you. Many have become the scorn and contempt of mankind, who once were as remote from the vices that destroyed them as you are; who once thought themselves as secure as you do. Of the repentant sinners that have fled to this house of mercy for refuge, divers of them once thought themselves infinitely superior to the offences they afterwards committed. They would once have trembled, if they had been told, that they were to plunge into the depravities, which have since polluted them. They would have thought it impossible, that they should stain the honour of their families by the abomination of their crimes; that they should bring down the old age of their parents with sorrow to the grave: and how would some of these unhappy persons have started, though an angel from heaven had told them, that they should openly break the holy marriage-vow, and shamefully violate
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the purest and most sacred of this world's connections, with the scandal of their crimes. And yet all this has happened in its fullest and most unhappy extent. The innocence that once adorned them totally forsook them; the vices and miseries, from which they once thought themselves eternally removed, overwhelmed and sunk them. But all crimes are common to all persons. The seeds of every vice are in the breast of every individual; and it is the mighty grace of the mighty God that suppresses them. Could any thing be less likely, than that the warm, the zealous Peter, should *deny* the blessed Jesus? He thought his resolution so strong, his faith so unconquerable, that he put up no petition to heaven to support him. In his own strength he went out; and in that strength he fell. Abhorring the thoughts of renouncing his gracious master, he knew not the power of temptation; he knew not the wretched weakness of human nature. He thought, like many of every age, that he could fashion his conduct to his own will; that he could practise the virtue he admired, and abstain from the vice he abhorred.)

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In this rash confidence, this self-trusting disciple attended the holy Jesus into the mournful garden; and amidst those mystic, unspeakable sorrows which surrounded his Saviour's soul, when he bore the iniquities of all mankind, this foolish boaster fell asleep. When he ceased to watch, he was on the brink of ruin. When the officers indeed seized his Lord, and were leading him to the tribunal where all the malice and power of iniquity were to be exerted, something like *zeal* appeared in Peter; "he drew his sword, and *smote* the servant of the high priest." This was the *warmth* of mere nature; this was such zeal as we have often heard of, and have often seen, God knows, in those, who make loud pretensions to faith in Christ. But the holy Jesus is not to be defended by the sword; nor his righteous gospel of peace to be recommended by such unholy methods. The wrath of man is not called upon to promote the righteousness of God; nor are his exalted truths to be profaned by terrifying men with *outward sufferings* into an acknowledgment of them. He that formed the heart of man as it is, to *Him* must we leave the direction

direction of it ; his light alone can illuminate and guide it. Outrageous violence, even in the cause of truth, is no proof of sincerity of heart ; for we have often seen these unnatural zealots speedily departing from the faith they have professed, and so ill defended, when they themselves have in their turn been called upon to follow their suffering Lord.

Of this weakness Peter stands forth as an everlasting example. Resolved, no doubt, to sacrifice his life with the Son of God, “ he followed him into the palace of the high priest, and one came unto him, saying, thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.” Now begins the trial. Jesus of Galilee, who had so often exerted his power to over rule the laws of nature, to deliver himself and his followers, seems now, from his mighty sufferings in the high priest’s palace, to submit himself and his disciples to the fiercest rage of his enemies. Peter sees him spit upon, buffeted, and smote ; he sees no display of almighty power to rescue him ; he sees no angel hastening from heaven to deliver him. The disciple is not above his Master ; nor has he any right to expect an exemption

exemption from the sufferings inflicted on him. “ He denied, therefore, *before them* “ *all*, saying, I do not know the man.” Surprising, but *common* alteration ! When he was in no danger, he could embrace death ; when it threatened him, he renounced his very integrity for life. But his weakness is still more to be displayed. That his denial may not appear to be something casual, he is attacked again ; “ another saw him and said “ unto them that were there, this fellow “ also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And “ again ” (from henceforth let none ever depend upon themselves) “ again he denied “ with an oath, I do not know the man.” To humble him yet more ; to teach all mankind more forcibly how weak we are, others again attack him and say, “ Surely thou art “ one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth “ thee. Then ” totally deserted for that season by the spirit of God ; then, in that hour of darkness, “ began he to curse and “ to swear, saying, I know not the man ! ” What ! does he not know the merciful, the holy Jesus ; whose life had been one continued display of goodness and tenderness ? Does he not know him, who had borne with

all the failings of his wayward disciples, had graciously revealed to them the profound and solemn truths of eternity; and had accommodated his sublime doctrines to their gross understandings? Does he not know *him*, whom he had seen walking upon the sea in the strength of his might, and who stretched out his arm to save this sinking apostate? Does he not know *him*, whom he had seen transfigured upon the holy mount, surrounded with the glories of eternity, that dazzled his mortal faculties; and whom he had seen attended by the most distinguished of the saints of God? Turn again and look at his holy sufferings; look at those stripes by which we are healed; look at his inimitable patience, by which he bears the blasphemies of those, who depend upon him, for the very breath they draw; look at the meek, the lowly Jesus, bearing all these miseries, that all mankind may live; and, then see, if thou dost not know the man!

Reflect now on the weakness of this servant of God, till you tremble for yourselves. From what corruption can you suppose yourselves secure, when Peter *with oaths* denied, that he knew the holy Jesus? Could any one,
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in appearance, be farther from any crime, than he from this? Let fear then for yourselves hereafter teach you tenderness for the failings of your brethren. Though you are clear at present from great and outward crimes, you may not be always so. Treasure up mercy against the time when you want it. For the severity of judgment you shew shall be abundantly repaid you; and the tears you cause others to shed, for your want of pity for their failings, shall certainly be atoned for by your own tears, shed in the bitterness of your own hearts. Whenever you turn your thoughts to this house of repentance and godly sorrow, you have the noblest opportunity of exercising this grand characteristic of the christian heart, "tenderness towards the failings of your fellow-creatures." Here are sinners open and convicted; stained with pollutions the most offensive to purity of manners; tottering on the very brink of other, and perhaps greater crimes: whatever you may in your mercy urge in their favour, themselves stand silent, and plead not their sad cause by argument, but by acknowledgment and tears. Here is a spacious field for your com-

passion. Here the truly christian mind can exert all its mighty powers, by pleading in the behalf of these forlorn offenders, that perhaps their inexperience ruined them; that perhaps their credulity, in *itself* commendable, in its *consequences* destructive, destroyed them; that perhaps a combination of circumstances, powerful, and far superior to the weakness of human virtue, hurried them on (mercy had almost said irresistibly) to ruin and destruction. All this, and much more than this, will the enlightened disciple of Jesus Christ plead in favour even of these miserable sinners. For when you view their corruptions, the light of the gospel will shew you, that you have but one security against all this misery yourselves, and that is the spirit of God abiding in your hearts, to teach and to purify you. If as yet you have it more than others, adore and praise him that gave it you; pray hourly that it may be continued to you, to preserve you from yourselves; and shew that you have it, by the fruit it always produces in heaven and earth, by the tenderest compassion for every weakness, and every imperfection of human creatures.

Consider

Consider also how our Lord treated this great offender. He did not hurry him away in his complicated guilt ; or summon him quick to the judgment seat of God, to feel the almighty power of him whom he had offended. No ; “ the Lord,” even that Lord whom he had just ungratefully denied with horrid execrations, “ turned and looked upon Peter ;” looked with the eye of tenderness and compassion, only to melt his heart into contrition and softness. Nay, as an everlasting encouragement to repentance, the holy Jesus, according to his wonted goodness, shews more particular attention to Peter, whose heart was wounded by his transgression. For after his resurrection, when the holy women are informed that he was risen from the dead, they are ordered to carry the joyful news to his disciples *and to Peter* : it is not sufficient, that he hears it with the rest ; a particular message must be sent to him, who had sinned, and was repenting. The tears and sorrows of sinners are ever deemed sacred in the sight of God, who accepts, as the highest offering, the acceptable sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart. This mercy which he then shewed

to Peter, he still shews to us, that now live and transgress. He bears with our iniquities, and waits for our repentance. He continues his mercies, though we abuse them, and shews by his forbearance towards every individual amongst us, the truth of that doctrine comfortable above every other, "That the God of all righteousness delighteth not in the death of a sinner."

You particularly, that are now seeking the Lord in this house with prayers and tears, have still further proof, if possible, of this long-suffering of the Almighty. It is but lately that all your crimes were on you, and that you lived forgetful of the God of heaven and earth. It is but yesterday, as it were, that your lips, which we now hear honouring Him, profaned His holy name; that your hearts, which now we trust adore Him, insulted and defied His eternal Majesty. The crimes, which now overwhelm you with shame and confusion; which now make you gladly embrace solitude and concealment; it is but lately that you gloried in these crimes, and made a boast of your eternal infamy. Never cease then, ye penitents, to offer up your everlasting praises to the Almighty,

Almighty, who has afforded you this blessed space of repentance; who did not hurry you away to his awful judgment-seat with all your crimes about you; but opened this holy house of devotion and mercy, where you may offer up yourselves to the God of all goodness; where your prayers and tears may ascend to heaven, and reconcile your gracious Father, whom your crimes had grievously offended.

And let all that now hear me look at the eminent saint, whose example I have held out to you, till you learn how great crimes may give place to great virtues. He that once disowned the blessed Jesus, afterwards preached his gospel before threatening kings and princes; and without fear daily offered up his life to him that had redeemed it with his precious blood. Reflect on this, and remember, that in a present sinner may be contained a future saint; that in a criminal you may behold an angel. Wait with patience for this divine change, and pass not cruel censure on those transgressors, whom a lively faith and a bitter repentance may perfectly restore to God, and open the kingdom of heaven to them

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as to you. The arm of the Lord is not shorthened ; nor is the power of his almighty grace at all weakened. The human heart is still subject to his holy operations : He can make even the finners of this house glorify his holy name ; and can render them bright examples of purity and devotion. Let not their past offences exclude them from your pious hopes ; but cast your eyes on the great examples, which the history of mankind affords ; wherein you will see every wicked passion converted, by the sacred power of God, into the most solid righteousness. The same Magdalen, that in the days of our Lord offended by her vices, made, if possible, more than amends by the edification of her virtues. These unhappy women have also *begun* the divine work, which their great fore-runner brought to its highest perfection. They acknowledge and bewail their offences. They lament the guilt they have contracted ; the domestic peace they have destroyed ; and the shameful scandal they have caused. They dare not venture on your justice to pronounce sentence upon them ; they entreat that your mercy may draw a veil before them. And as this great
apostle's

apostle's transgression and repentance pleads thus strongly for mercy towards you that have sinned, and are now sorry for your sins; so at the same time to what bitterness of repentance; to what a perfect change of life and manners does it call you! St. Peter laboured to exceed the other disciples in righteousness, in zeal, in humility. The ardour of christian holiness, though then burning in its greatest warmth, was more eminently conspicuous in this saint. So profound was his humility that tradition informs us, when crucifixion was appointed for his punishment, he entreated that he might be crucified with his head downwards; judging himself utterly unworthy to die in the same manner with the holy Jesus. As you likewise have outgone others in iniquity, so now you are called upon to exceed them in holiness. The saints of God are held forth for your imitation in holy scripture: there you see that they arrived at peace and glory by repentance unfeigned; by devotion sincere and exalted; by humility solid and edifying. The path to eternal happiness which they gloriously trod, lies directly before you; the gracious, merciful God, that
guided

guided them, is still as ready to direct *your* steps into the way that leads to life; and the angels that rejoiced over them, when they returned to God, are as ready to celebrate your deliverance from sin and misery, and to proclaim with blessed transports of holy joy, through all the regions of eternal mercy, that you who were lost are found, that you who were dead are alive again.

SER-

S E R M O N IX.

I. COR. xv. 23.

Every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

THE glorious and triumphant resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, is the gracious manifestation of divine goodness to the sons of men. Dark and uncertain as the state of man is by nature, ignorant as we find ourselves of all that is hereafter to come, the Christ of God is to us the joyful sun of righteousness, that enlighteneth this land of darkness, and maketh the decrees of God to shine forth in all the splendor of heavenly love and mercy. Though we are born to misery, as the sparks fly upwards; though we live but a short space, and that thick set with heavy troubles and sore affliction;

tion; though the day of human life ends in a night of dreary darkness, and we are obliged to surrender our dearest friends and our own body to the grave that is open to receive all mankind, yet still, in the midst of judgment, hath the Lord remembered mercy; He hath softened his heaviest sentence with the comforts of his holy promises. Though, for the rebellion of man, he defaced the beauty of his own works, overturned the universal order he had established, and changed the paradise of God into a wild and barren wilderness; yet even in this land of sorrow does the voice of mercy speak, and comfort the hearts of the weary pilgrims. The triumph of our Redeemer over death and hell is the glorious display of his almighty love, and when we see him ascend into the highest heavens, and take possession of the throne of glory, we know it is for our sakes that he was born, that he lived on earth, that he died, that he rose again, that he ascended into heaven. In the midst of all our anxiety and all our fears, when we are trembling to think on the future dispensations of heaven, when the state of death appears to us a state of horrid darkness,

darkness, and we hardly know how to surrender ourselves up to we know not what, to be transported we know not where, then with the eye of faith let us behold the victories of the Lord Jesus, breaking the bands of death, bursting forth from the prison of the grave, ransoming our helpless nature, cloathing it with the glories and beauty of angels, and crying aloud to all the sons of men, to all the children of mortality, whether they be alive, or whether they be dead, "Just as I am, so shall ye be." When man forsook the Lord his God, then did his Creator withdraw himself from the light of man, and with-held that bright and glorious light, which had before surrounded him, and directed his steps. From thence came pain and misery, want and sickness, discontent with all that was present, a fearful looking for, of all that was to come. The light of heaven was extinguished, and this world became the wretched habitation of spirits wandering from the right way, of souls plunged into misery, and daily adding to their misery. In sorrow shalt thou eat of the fruit of the ground; dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, was the sentence

sentence past on rebellious man, which the arm of the Lord hath sorely executed. If we look no farther than the period of human life, it should seem to be a state in which the God that is above placed us in his wrath, when he was sore displeased for our offences against him. The days which are begun in helpless weakness are continued in much and various trouble, till they end in fear and trembling. To know whether what succeeds this strange unintelligible state be good or bad, to know how to avoid the one and obtain the other, all this is beyond the reach of human wisdom to contrive, or of human power to execute. The light that must here direct us, the strength that must here support us, must all proceed from the father of light, and the God of all power. It is He that must shew us the end of his own works, that must reveal to us those important secrets of a future state. All we know reacheth not beyond the grave, nor can all the wit of man even conjecture concerning that first moment when the eyes are closed in death. Here we must stop in silent fear, and bow our heads with lowly reverence before the great and mighty

mighty cause of our being. But he hath in mercy to his helpless creatures here relieved our distress. He hath graciously shewed us the end of His appointments, and hath in the brightest colours displayed His tenderness and mercy. In the Son of his love he hath shewed what He designs concerning human nature: this glorious Saviour is only the *head* of a company which no man can number; is only the first-born among many brethren; is only the first-fruits of a future general and universal harvest. By his resurrection from the dead, he hath rescued our nature, and entitled all that bear it to a joyful resurrection to life everlasting. As the first-fruits, in the typical service of the Jews, were solemnly gathered from among the rest of the harvest, and carried to the temple with much religious joy, as an earnest of a future plentiful harvest, which God would bring to perfection; so is this first-fruit of human nature, the body of our Redeemer, the beginning of divine goodness, and the first discovery of that great and glorious victory, which he hath purposed in the fulness of time to obtain. By *his* resurrection we are taught to look at death without

out fear, and can resign ourselves to our last and fatal change without murmuring or discontent. Though we die, we die not without hope; though worms destroy this body, yet we rely on the adorable love, on the almighty power of our Redeemer, praying and trusting that this corruptible may hereafter put on incorruption, that this mortal may hereafter put on immortality. Though we lie down in the dust, and return no more to the place from whence we have departed; though we are taken away from the sight and remembrance of men to lie down in the land where all things are forgotten; yet when we behold our triumphant Lord rising out of the darkness of death into the light of eternity; when we see him that was laid in the grave the son of man, coming forth the mighty, glorious Son of God; when we see the gates of heaven lift up their heads, and the everlasting doors unfold themselves, that he may enter upon light and life eternal, then do we joyfully worship this rising Saviour, then can we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil, for death we see is but the entrance to life everlasting, and the grave
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the blessed passage to the kingdom of heaven. That voice, which gave life and beauty to our Redeemer's body, will again be heard from the clouds of heaven, when all that are in their graves shall come forth and live. Those angels, which attended our victorious Lord, shall hereafter see our lifeless bodies rise up in heavenly beauty, and shall adore with loudest praises, that mighty, glorious God, who hath thus been able to subdue all things to himself. Those gates of heaven, which once unfolded themselves to admit the Lord of Life, shall hereafter be opened wide to receive that blessed, innumerable train, which hath been washed in the blood of the Lamb of God, which hath been rendered beautiful by the beauty which he himself hath given them. But every man in his own order ; the appointments of heaven are to be executed when and how the Almighty pleaseth. We must wait with pious patience and holy resignation, for that blessed moment which will finish all our troubles, and put an end to all our sorrows. The course that is given us to finish, we must finish with perfect submission to His holy will. The glorious state to which we are

hereafter appointed is, in the mean time, a comfort in the forest trials, and in the deepest distress. Yet a little time, and our fears will be removed, our ignorance dispelled, our passions quieted, and pain and sickness will be known no more. Our life on earth will lead to eternal glory in heaven; and though afflictions may surround us, yet, let us steadfastly look on the Lord Jesus, who suffered and sorrowed as never man did, and we shall then see the gracious meaning of the mysteries of God, who hath for a time withdrawn himself from our sight, but hath in the end appointed to man a rest from all his labours. As Christ himself hath risen from the dead, so shall they that are Christ's, that are totally devoted to him, rise from the grave victorious over mortality and corruption, when the Son of man shall hereafter come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. But in order to share in his victory, and to partake of his glories, it will not be enough to be called by his name, and to serve him with an outward service. Those only are Christ's and heirs of the promises he has made, who are conformed to the *spirit* of his gospel, and worship him in
spirit

spirit and in truth. These are the sons of immortality, these the souls whom Christ at his second coming is to exalt to life everlasting. Barely to worship him without a change and renewal of the heart, is to mock him with a service most hateful, and to deceive your own souls. Those that are to follow him into the highest heaven, must follow him here on earth. The same mind which was in Christ must be also in christians. His humility must banish pride and haughtiness from *your* heart. When ambition tempts and distracts your soul, remember the humble state of the lowly Jesus, who had not where to lay his head. When you are led to insult or despise the wretched poverty of your fellow-creatures, behold the Saviour of the world poor as they were; hear him crying from heaven, these are they whom my hands have formed, whom my spirit supporteth, whom my blood hath purified, these are my brethren. If you are Christ's, in all things, and at all times, the humble spirit of Christ will mould and fashion the inmost thoughts and affections of your hearts.—His charity must also fill you full of heavenly love and goodness. His only business was to

blefs mankind, and if you are his difciples, your thoughts, words, and works will all promote the happinefs of thofe with whom you are concerned. What right can we have to ufe the name of Chrift, or to expect to rife with him hereafter to eternal glory, whose only bufinefs it is to perplex and diftrefs mankind? Chriftianity is love unfeigned, is charity unbounded: where it truly is, that hand doth no evil, that tongue fpeaketh no evil, that heart thinketh no evil. Where hardnefs and unkindnefs dwelleth, there dwelleth none of the fpirit of Chrift, there is none of that earneft of future happinefs, which *they* fhall be fummoned to by the angels of God, who have been led by the good and tender fpirit that ruled in Chrift. — Whatever things have fhone in him, muft alfo fhine in you, if you hope to fhare in that glory which filleth the heaven above. To thofe that have here on earth lived as the Lord Jefus himfelf did, fhall he afterwards appear as the great deliverer, as the almighty Saviour. Examine yourfelves then and fee, whether you are of the number of thofe for whom Chrift purchafed life, and immortality. See whether you have
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the meekness, the humility, the charity, the patience of the blessed Jesus. This is a surer sign that you belong to him, than any of those delusions, which make men run from one denomination of christians to another, as if Christ was to be found here or there. The only place on earth in which he dwells, is in an humble and a contrite heart, where he subdueth all things to himself, where he driveth away the corruption of nature, and reneweth that glorious image of himself, in which man was originally created. If you hope then to be like Christ in heaven, be like him on earth: then, after the few days of this short and painful life are over, shall you enter on the glorious sabbath, and the everlasting joys of God. The resurrection and ascension of Christ you may then contemplate with joy and thankfulness, for his resurrection hath taken away the sting of death from you, his ascension hath opened the gates of heaven for your admittance.

S E R M O N X.

LUKE xvii. 27.

*If any man take not up his cross and follow me,
he cannot be my disciple.*

IN the holy scriptures we contemplate the Son of God both in his suffering and triumphant state. We first see him in his painful agonies for the sins of men ; we behold the Lamb of God, in whom was no guile, loaded with all the contumelies which an enraged multitude could invent ; dragged from bar to bar, exposed to all the abuse and cruelty of unbridled bigotry ; quietly suffering reproach and pain, committing his holy cause to him who judgeth righteously. We see the angel of the eternal covenant of peace sinking under the cruelty of those for whose salvation he was born ; we see the horrors to which his human nature was subject, but we find not one eye to pity him. We see him ascending the bitter mount, and stretched out upon the sacred cross, breathing forth
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his tortured soul, under such agonies as rent the solid rocks, and convulsed the whole frame of nature. Out of all this we see him rising victorious, and ascending from the grave into the highest heavens; we see the chains of death burst asunder on the morning of the resurrection, and all the powers of the grave defeated. How glorious and resplendent did our despised Saviour appear, when he came out of the sepulchre freed from the garments of mortality, and adorned for the mansions of eternity! How did the angels bow before him, and worship him with their louded songs for the glorious salvation he had finished, for the universal redemption he had so divinely accomplished! All the sons of God shouted for joy at this second creation as they had done at the first; for they now saw, tho' at a distance, a blessed moment when evil should be no more, but all should be peace, and joy, and praise. All this we see by the enlightened eye of faith, and we desire, O holy Jesus, for these and all thy works of mercy, to reverence and adore thee through all the distant periods of eternity! How unbounded was thy love which moved thee to such great
and

and painful undertakings ! These thy works of redemption are too high and sublime for man *fully* to comprehend, till the faculties of his soul are enlarged, and he is become an angel of God. But in the mean time we desire, O righteous Saviour, to bless and praise thy divine love from day to day as far as we are able : we wish to behold thy cross, and all thy painful agonies, till we are conformed to thy blessed image, the power of thy resurrection, and lost in the unfathomable ocean of thy goodness ! It is no uncommon sight to see man much affected with the account of our Lord's sufferings ; they were so exquisite, that we need but repeat them to move your compassion : and when this is done, you think the work is over ; you believe you have sympathised with your crucified Lord, and conclude that to you are the promises made, and that your's is the kingdom of heaven. But if this is all, (as alas, it generally is !) the work is so far from being finished, that it is not yet begun. You are all of you called to higher things ; hear what our dying Lord says to *you*, and to all the sons of men, as he is hanging upon the cross, “ If any man take not up
“ his

“his cross and follow me, he cannot be my
“disciple.” Here you have the terms set
before you; these are the conditions pro-
claimed through earth and heaven: choose
you then whether you will, a life of carnal
ease, and brutal sloth, the crowded high-
way of the world, the way that leads to
pleasures, riches, and honours; or the
rough and narrow way that leads to life
eternal, in which the Son of God suffered
and died, and wherein all must suffer and
die, that walk to the land of everlasting rest.
Here is life and death set before you, choose
you whether you will; but oh, may the
Lord of mercy direct you in your choice;
that you may have the wisdom to prefer
the divine life of eternity, before the perish-
ing life of this dark apostate state.

That you may know *how* you are to *take
up the cross*, I shall shew you what it is to
suffer and be crucified with the Son of God,
without which we see there can be no en-
joying the kingdom of heaven. Now do
not imagine that you are called to be *out-
wardly crucified*, or that you are always to
undergo *outward* sufferings, and pains to
torment

torment the *body*: and do not think, which you are very apt to do, that because there is no *outward* persecution, no call to give up our *lives* for our heavenly religion, that therefore the cross of Christ is ceased, and we are not now called upon to be crucified with him. Whoever thinks thus, is not even a *babe* in Christ; he knows no more of the *spirit* and *life* of the gospel, than if he was buried in Turkish or Pagan darkness. For from the fall of Adam to the last universal restoration of degraded nature, the language of the Son of God is this, “If thou dost not die with me, then dost thou deny me.” Look back upon the fall of man in paradise, and you will then understand what it is to *suffer* and be *crucified* with Christ. When men there forsook the living God, they fell from their heavenly and spiritual nature into an earthly life, where all was misery and confusion. At first mankind lived in heaven, the paradise of God was their exalted abode; and it was their only employment to behold and praise the all-perfect, adorable Jehovah, whose nature is the centre of all perfections, who is the root of eternity, and whose glories,

glories, ever springing up in boundless beauties, were the light and life of temporary and eternal nature. But unhappy man turned away from this sacred fountain, to drink at the bitter and corrupted streams, which his wanton imagination had prompted him to hunt after; he fell from God, and shut himself out of the paradise of the spiritual and heavenly life, and was placed in the world we now live in, where we wander in darkness and stupid folly, not knowing whither the next step will lead us. Behold us now, ye angels of God, and see how miserably far we are fallen from our morning brightness! We were once, like you, placed near the eternal throne, where we beheld the brightest glories of the Godhead; we had once, like you, our golden harps to sound forth Jehovah's praise; we once freely ranged with you in the splendid courts of heaven, and have often been in the same circle, when we veiled our faces before the King of kings and Lord of lords, to worship him in awful and sacred silence. Behold us now, ye angels of God, and see how sin has changed us! Look down from your seats of glory, and see if
you

you can discover in us any remains of your own greatness, any spark of that sacred fire of divine love, which once burned in our breasts. Good God! look down in pity upon us, or we are lost. For how shall we rend the veil that separates earth from heaven; how shall we take out the sting of the grave, and change death into life? By what means shall we cloath our souls again with the divine nature, or how shall we drop this grievous burden of flesh and blood, which cannot enter into the pure and immaculate kingdom of God? See now the goodness of the Lord our Saviour in this our distress! He becomes our Redeemer and full deliverer. He takes our nature upon him, and by virtue of that union he is in every soul a principle of that eternal life which man had in paradise. As we died to God and happiness, when we fell from our first state into this lower world, there was no way of restoring us again but by giving us that life which we had lost. The Christ of God immediately became this life; he is the resurrection and the life; he raises up in us the divine nature, which mortifies and crucifies our
corrupt

corrupt natural part, which brings the joys and beauties of heaven into this earthen vessel, and is a real redemption from all the miseries of time and eternity. Here then you may learn how you are to take up the same cross which Christ has borne. For as you are fallen from God both in body and soul, and are placed in a world which is at enmity with God, there is no salvation but in your having your life above this, even a life which comes from God himself. Now when this life begins to act in you, it draws you to God; being from heaven, it is pure, and mortifies your earthly affections, by not permitting you to run after those things which the world can offer you. It unites you with God your Saviour, and all the company of heaven, even while you are in this world, for which reason you are drawn off from trifles, that you may enjoy the communication of this blessed society. This then is the cross of a christian; though he be placed in a state, which offers baits to all his senses, and though his corrupt nature drives him on to gratify his brutal animal passions, yet knowing that none but his redeeming God is lovely, he refuses to comply

ply with the sollicitations of flesh and blood, and desires rather to suffer all the pain of such a mortification, than to leave the enjoyment of that holy and blessed God whom his soul loves. Look now into yourselves and see, whether a true christian has not a daily cross to carry: you see yourselves fond of this worldly thing, and eagerly pursuing that: the true christian has like passions with you, but Jesus Christ dwelling in his heart, draws him from such mean gratifications, and will not suffer him to obscure his heavenly life, by running again into these earthly vanities. Heaven is opened in the soul of a true christian, he must therefore bid an eternal farewell to the world and the things thereof. Judge from what you feel yourselves, whether this be not to die daily? Look into yourselves too for another purpose, and see whether you *do* daily take up the cross of Christ and follow him; whether you are daily crucified to the world, that you may live to God? If you are not, your religion is all a solemn mockery; it pretends to be something, but it is all an abomination in the sight of God. He will have the whole heart, and will not
suffer

suffer any thing to be there but himself; if earthly affections are not therefore daily subdued, we pollute the temple of the living God, and make our Father's house a den of thieves. Judge now, each of you, for yourselves, whether you be a disciple of Christ. One of you perhaps, may say, I am of the church of Rome, and therefore am safe; another of you may cry, I am of that reformed church whose discipline and doctrines are pure and unmixed; and a third probably may reply, that he is still nearer perfection, being united with a chosen band who are still farther advanced in divine knowledge, and are still more *reformed* than others. All these are false and deceitful pleas; and if your hearts are not so full of divine love, as to make you renounce the world and all its painted trifles, you are so far from being the favourites of the Lord Jesus, that he cannot admit you into his *presence*, for holy, holy, holy is the God of our salvation: whosoever walketh not in his paths, and beareth not his cross, cannot be his disciples. Let us take a view then of some of our Lord's last sufferings, where we may behold that sacred love which knew

no bounds, and may see the narrow path which leads to life; and as we advance we shall see in every step the true disciple made conformable to the sufferings of his blessed master.

How is the christian soul overwhelmed with love and wonder, when it contemplates the agonies of its afflicted Saviour in the garden! Here, separated from the world, and surrounded with darkness, does he pour out his afflicted soul in prayer, and sigh in secret before that God, who knows and pities the terrors of an human soul, groaning under a separation from God that made it. Who can describe what the Son of God felt, when he sweat as it were great drops of blood, as he was purifying our human nature? Falling prostrate on the earth, he seeks for no help but in a submission to the divine will, and offers himself to drink the bitter cup, which is appointed to purify polluted nature. The spiritual christian, enflamed with this love of his Saviour, rushes after him into the garden, and claims the promise made him, that he shall drink of the cup that his Lord has drank of. He remains in a state of inward solitude, and though the

Vol. I. L light

light of heaven is withdrawn from his soul, and all is dark within, yet he loses not his confidence, but fixes there where his Saviour has been before; and though his lips tremble, and his tongue falters, yet his language is, “Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done.” Who can refrain from tears, to see the Saviour of the world hurried to the bar of a cruel judge, falsely accused of blaspheming the God that is above, and left to support all this as he could without one friend to comfort him! How meek was that spirit, and how well governed was that tongue, which did not boil with anger, nor utter the least reproaches for all these unmerited sufferings. Blessed Jesus, we fall down before thee, and adore thee, for this thy perfect pattern of humble resignation, and holy meekness! Gracious Saviour, give us this thy spirit, that like thee we may bear all injuries, in peace and quietness of soul, returning only love for hatred, and earnest prayers for the bitterest curses! Let us learn of thee that petition so disagreeable to flesh and blood, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” What disciple of the holy Jesus would not rejoice and be exceeding

exceeding glad to tread in these steps of his adorable master; who, though over all God blessed for ever, yet bore without reply the mean and cruel treatment of those whom his own hands had formed, and for whom his precious blood was instantly to be poured out. Let us learn of this truly meek and lowly Lord, that so the wild and frantic fire of our own nature may be extinguished, and nothing may burn in us but the mild and gentle flame of divine love, which is the spirit of God, and the life of angels and angelical men.

As we advance farther with our suffering lord, how do the clouds gather about this bright Sun of righteousness! Behold *him* who brings *all* the mercy of God to a wretched world loaded with a cross, and ascending with slow and weary step to that mount, from whence every soul of man was hereafter to fly from earth to heaven. Here we see the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God. He renounced all that was in nature, every worldly thing, adhering only to the God of all strength. Though persecuted by men, and in appearance forsaken by God, yet it is the language of his submissive heart,

“ The cup which my Father has given me
“ shall I not drink it ?” He exposed his
sacred person to all the trouble that was
decreed for him, stretching out his arms to
receive the whole appointment of heaven.
And as he hangs upon the cross, pierced
through and through with the sharpest pains
and bitterest sorrows, he cries out to every
one of us, “ Take up thy cross and follow
“ me, or thou canst not be my disciple;
“ rise thou careless one from thy slumber
“ of life, and tread in the steps of me thy
“ Saviour : awake from thy idle dreams of
“ worldly peace and worldly quiet, for
“ these are not the portion of my disciples;
“ hear the cry of thy Redeemer, breaking
“ forth from the bottom of his tormented
“ agonising soul, and then expect, if thou
“ darest, to live in carnal security without
“ pain or anguish; hear his departing
“ groans which rend the solid rocks, and
“ tear open the bowels of the earth, and
“ know that thou must *spiritually* die with
“ Christ.” Thy old man, thy corrupt nature
must be crucified to the world, that so the
new man, the heavenly nature, may be alive
and act in thee. Behold the crown of
thorns

thorns on Jesus's head, and see the way which thou must take to obtain an everlasting crown of glorious splendor, which fadeth not away. Behold all the agonies of thy dying Saviour, and let thy soul experience them all, and then mayest thou boldly say like him, "It is finished;" "Death is swallowed up in life, and time is lost in eternity; I have broke the bands of corrupted flesh and blood, and am burst forth into the clear and exalted state of the spiritual nature. I am crucified with the Lord of life, and have laid my stubborn nature in his holy grave, and am now preparing to ascend the everlasting mount of God, to enter the gates of heaven, and to take possession of the eternal spiritual paradise."—Wherefore, now, my brethren, let me entreat you to stop a moment in your career of life, to lift up your eyes to a crucified Saviour, and to read the lessons which he teaches you. Behold and wonder what love the God of heaven and earth has for you his creatures: see the man of sorrows, without form or comeliness, with his visage marred, and like an unkindly shoot springing out of a dry

and barren ground, and then fall down before this despicable form, for this is the joy of the whole earth. This is thy Saviour, the mighty one of Israel, whose name is Jehovah, and whose nature is love. Fall down at the foot of his cross, and embrace it with thy outstretched arms, for all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared with it. Mean as it may appear, it is hewn out of the tree of life, and is the very ladder of Jacob, the foot whereof is indeed on earth, but the top is in the highest heavens. Think not then to arrive at the glory of the resurrection but by this narrow way; stripped you must be of flesh and blood, before you can enter the kingdom of God; and stripped you must be too of what is still closer, even earthly affections, before you can taste of heavenly joys. Deceive yourselves no longer therefore, by thinking that you are christians, if you believe in this thing, or believe in that; christianity, you may be assured, is as much above this, as heaven is above earth; you are not christians, till you are dead to the world, and buried from all its vanities; till your souls, though still in your mortal

mortal

mortal bodies, are risen into eternity, and live in the presence of the adorable Jehovah, and walk in the light of the Lamb. To obtain this, your souls must be dead to the world, and all its idle vanities; your life must be one continued act of waiting upon the Lord, that you may die to your own will and be alive to his. There is no religion but this; all else is an idle dispute between frantic lunatics, and it matters not which comes off victorious. If you had all knowledge, so that you could read the dark mysterious books of fate, which are written in characters that no mortal eye can unfold; if your knowledge could penetrate into the heavens above, and search into the inmost essence of every exalted spirit there; nay, if you had faith, that mighty worker, which can change the face of inward and outward nature, if you had even this in such a degree as to alter the works of God, yet all is no more than the dust of the earth in the sight of thy God, for thou art still but an apostate spirit imprisoned in a carnal dungeon; if thou art not so filled with divine love, as to give up all for Jehovah, and to bear with joy and thankfulness all the afflictions of life,

life, thinking thyself happy in the arms of thy redeeming God, of whose perfections we can hardly discover the faintest glimpse from the fairest forms of created objects.

Away then with every vanity and every trifle ; let your souls rise to their eternal good ; let them trample on folly like the God that has redeemed them, till the gates of heaven fly open to receive you, and you join that precious choir which was made perfect through sufferings, and is now celebrating the eternal sabbath of holy rest, where *all* in the fulness of time shall cease from their labours, to the honour and praise of that adorable and mighty Redeemer, who purifies both the spiritual and material world ; and proclaims an everlasting peace through all the various kingdoms of earth and heaven,

SER-

S E R M O N XI.

MATTHEW xi. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

THE blessed event of our Lord's incarnation is the first step towards the unfolding those various prophecies, which had been communicated to the ancient world. The prophetic was from thenceforward to yield to the evangelic dispensation. The goodly fellowship of the prophets was to be succeeded by the glorious company of the apostles. All that holy men from age to age
had

had foretold, by the illumination of the eternal spirit of the Almighty, was then at hand ; and all to be unfolded, to the astonishment of men and angels, in the mysterious life, and in the adorable death of the blessed Jesus. The eyes of mankind, from our first fall into misery, had been ever directed to this great principle of restoration. Man, from a state of perfect purity, such as befitted the power and goodness of Him who made us, had plunged into disobedience, and all its woful consequences. Ignorance and misery in every shape instantly overwhelmed the sons of men ; and every element in degraded nature lost its original beauty, and conspired to encrease the misery of those, for whose comfort it was created. Had man been left in this state without divine comfort, earth would hardly have differed from hell, or men been distinguished from devils. But the Almighty darted forth a ray of heavenly light from his eternal throne, and declared that in the fulness of time a Redeemer should appear, equal to the work of universal restoration ; whose mighty deliverance should reach backward and forward, from the first creation of
man,

man, to that awful day of judgment, which shall put an end to the existence of this frame of nature; whose powerful efficacy shall purge the things in heaven as well as the things on earth, and restore the whole creation to the love and protection of its great Creator. This was he that should come; this was he for whom all angels looked. This was he, whom different prophets had agreed to describe, when influenced by the spirit of heaven. At one time they paint him as the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; restoring and renewing the heavens and the earth; cloathing things visible and invisible with eternal splendour and glory. At another the scene changes, and this mighty God is a man of sorrows; this everlasting Father is despised and rejected of men. At one time they describe him receiving the worship of all the host of heaven; laying the foundations of the earth, and stretching out the heavens like a curtain; at another they represent him oppressed and afflicted; dying, like the helpless sons of Adam; though the language of all the prophets had been this, The heavens and the earth shall perish, but

but thou, O Son of God, remainest: they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. This wonderful deliverer, thus differently described, was held out to the contemplation of all ages, in the rich and expressive descriptions of the Temple service. That sacred spirit, which appointed the tongues of the prophets to describe the Messiah, appointed also the actions of the priests, to represent the progress of that eternal sacrifice which he was to offer up for the sins of the creation. One while you see them choosing a sacrifice without blemish, that it may the more fitly represent him, who was without guile; and who, though in all the other infirmities of our nature was like us, was yet without sin. Again you see him bleeding on the cross, when you see him offered up in his representatives on the altar at Jerusalem. On the altar of incense, which sends forth a grateful perfume to heaven, there you see a faint shadow of *his* merits, with whom the God of heaven and earth is well pleased. When the high priest, cloathed in all the vene-

venerable majesty of the Temple, enters the sacred retirement of the holy of holies, and by virtue of the expiatory sacrifice offered up in the outer Temple, brings from thence a blessing on the waiting, adoring congregation ; then, as far as things on earth can represent the things in heaven, we see a faithful image of him who, from the altar of the cross, ascended into the highest heavens, there to plead the merits of his atoning sacrifice offered up in this lower world ; and to bring from thence the blessings of peace, immortality, and glory, to all who worship him with faith and humility. This was he that was to come ; after whom the disciples of John were enquiring. For this their question, our blessed Lord does not return a direct answer, contained in a simple affirmation, that he was the holy one of God. He refers them to what had been foretold by all the prophets whom he had sent before him, and bids them compare *his* actions with *their* predictions. The business of the Messiah was to remove the miseries of the fall, and to banish those various distresses, under which mankind labour. Jesus of Nazareth therefore opened the eyes of the blind to behold

behold the various beauties of the creation, and gave to the lame the power of walking. The lepers, those miserable wretches, whose offensive disorder makes it painful even to the charitable to administer to their assistance, even these are purified by the almighty efficacy of his command; and those who are deaf to every sound of nature, have in an instant their ears opened to hear that mighty voice, to which the whole creation yields obedience. He calls the dead from their sleep of death, and the grave opens of its own accord, and the lifeless corpse becomes again an animated, intellectual, reasoning being. Thus did he shew his power over all nature. Though cloathed in the form of the carpenter's son, he yet appeared invested with all that power, which he had heretofore displayed, when seated on his eternal throne, he called the earth into being, and ordered the sun to shine in the firmament above, and it instantly poured forth its light and heat. What he did in Palestine, was meant but as a *discovery* of the power which he possessed. It was only to shew what he would hereafter do. It was meant to prove, that his
vifit

visit here was the visit of divine love, and eternal mercy; that he that then healed *some*, would hereafter heal *all*. What he did too in the bodies of men was a figure of the mighty things which he did in their souls. He that gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, opened also the spiritual eyes and ears of men, to see and hear those heavenly truths which proceed from the fountain of eternal wisdom. He that gave to the lame the power of walking, gave to sinners the power of advancing in the paths of holiness. He that purified the leper's body, purged away also the far greater impiety of sin, conducted again the unrighteous to the Temple of the Lord, from whence his uncleanness had separated him, and presented him in unspotted purity to the Father of heaven and earth. When he restored every vital power to the dead, he shewed that he could give again the life of heaven to sinful man, and bestow upon him all those powers which fled from him in paradise. Thus did he bless mankind when he preached the gospel to the poor. The message of peace, and the tidings of great joy which he brought from heaven, he brought

brought to the *poor*, he brought to them who were in want; he asked nothing of them who heard him, but that they should feel they *wanted* him. He came among us not because we were rich, but because we were poor; he came not because we were righteous, but because we were sinners. They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; they that have never offended need not a *sacrifice*, but they who have transgressed; they that are rich need no assistance, but they who are poor. To the *poor* therefore is the gospel preached; to the poor, needy sons of men, oppressed with guilt, in slavery to sin, ignorant of the truths of God, standing on the verge of the grave, beyond which no mortal eye can pierce, to see what shall succeed to the miseries of this present state. If they then who are thus circumstanced are not poor, there is not in nature such a thing as poverty. Human life, in its best and most ornamented state, is poverty absolute, is misery to be pitied by the most unfeeling heart. If we are for a moment pleased with the things about us, it is because we are too foolish to consider our condition aright, and see not
to

to what a miserable end our few hours of dissipation lead. All that is horrible and shocking in nature must be pronounced the sad lot of poor man, while his life on earth closes with the bitter pangs of death. The high and irresistible evidence therefore, that our Lord descended from heaven, is displayed in the blessed truths contained in his gospel. There the ignorant are taught, the careless are awakened, finners are exhorted, the fearful are encouraged, the humble are excepted, and all are invited to partake of the eternal mercies of the universal Father. The truths of the gospel are not like the philosophical refinements of human reason, calculated to amuse and mock the soul of man; offering themselves to a few speculative spirits, and haughtily disdaining the bulk of mankind: No; they are to all what all do want. Where they are received they *teach*; where they teach, they give life and power; and, by degrees, exalt the sinner into a saint; the saint into an angel of God. These blessed truths of the gospel require no exalted capacity to receive them. They are designed for man ignorant; they are given to make him wise.

They tell, in language so plain, that a way-faring man, though a fool, cannot mistake it, that man is born to misery, because man has transgressed the will of God; that the blood of Jesus Christ is offered up as a means of purification; that this world is meant to prepare us for a better; and that therefore the poor are to be contented, while the rich are to be humble. The meanest capacity can there see, as well as the most exalted, the various duties of their condition; and those progressive steps of purification, by which the soul ascends from earth to heaven, from time to eternity. When such is the gospel, and such its blessed intention, how comes it, that any can be offended at it? How comes it, that the ignorant will refuse instruction; the sinner pardon; and the fearful comfort? Yet, so it is: this gracious message of eternal life has always been refused, and rejected by many. The appetites of men have perverted their judgment; and the still voice of eternal wisdom has been stifled by the noisy rage of passion. The desires of men are fixed on the gratification of their appetites; call them to an higher life, and
though

though the voice comes from the highest heaven, and from the throne of the Almighty, they will still disobey the summons. Therefore it was that the Jews of old disobeyed. A Saviour born in a stable, living a life of poverty and self-denial, and dying an ignominious death, was but ill-suited to the expectations of those, who dreamed of nothing but thrones and scepters, and all the empty enjoyments of unbounded wealth. Mistaking images for realities, and future for present promises, they painted to themselves the descendants of Abraham as treading on the necks of nations, and Jerusalem receiving the homage of all mankind as her abject slaves. Unworthy as this partial allotment appears of the divine goodness, which cares alike for all its creatures, it had however so possessed the minds of the Jews, that they were blind to the mighty miracles of the blessed Jesus; were deaf to the astonishing wisdom of his doctrines; and in the depth of their religious blindness preferred a robber before the Holy One of Israel, and condemned the Lord of life to die upon the cross. This was the offence which *they* took. And

bleſſed is he at this day, whoſoever ſhall not be offended in the holy Jeſus. There is ſtill the greateſt danger, leaſt thoſe who profeſs themſelves his diſciples ſhould be offended in him. His precepts thwart the paſſions of men, and it is much to be feared, leaſt that ſhould be rejected which is diſliked. Whoever knows what Jeſus Chriſt commands, and obeys it not, is offended in him. If he commands you to forgive every injury, however grievous, however unmerited, if you do not then fully and perfectly forgive, you are offended in him. If he commands you to tread in his ſteps, who lived a life of ſelf-denial and mortification, and you are hurried away in purſuit of pleaſures and gratifications, you then are offended in him. But bleſſed is that diſciple, who, placing his ſacred Maſter before his eyes continually, conforms his life to *his* holy precepts, to his divine example. The buſineſs of a chriſtian is to follow his Saviour from the manger to the croſs. That painful life, which he led for *our* ſakes, it is *our* wiſdom to conform to, for *our* own. View him in the ſtable, deſtitute of every comfort; then complain not of poverty,

nor

nor let your desires wander after the pleasures of life; correct your passions by this instructive example; and contemplate the holy, neglected Jesus, till you scorn the riches which others pursue, and love the poverty which others fear. Behold him destitute of every earthly distinction, and from thence learn to treat those poor ones with tenderness and affection, to whom the Son of God was like. In the stable, where the Saviour of the world was born, all distinctions vanish; and poverty is in a manner *consecrated* by the poverty of the Son of God. The enlightened christian therefore knows no superiority which his station gives him, but supports riches, as he would poverty. He feels himself no way the better for them, nor others at all the worse without them. He looks upon himself as a steward appointed to administer to the comfort of others; and while he gives, he gives with that humility which would tremble to exalt itself over those that receive. Following this perfect pattern, through the various stages of his continuance on earth, the enlightened christian takes no offence at the lessons which appear so bright, in the life of his

M 3 Saviour.

Saviour. This he esteems a comment upon his commands, contemplates it without interruption, prays to be conformed to it without ceasing, and labours to imitate it with glorious success. When he views his Lord in the wilderness, tenderly pitying the bodily wants of those that followed him, it softens his own heart to the necessities of those about him, and he gladly deals out his bread to the hungry. When he sees this pattern of tenderness hastening to comfort the afflicted sisters for the death of their beloved brother, he himself is glad to hasten to the house of mourning, to weep with those that weep, and to lessen the afflictions of his neighbours, by bearing part of them. When he sees him pitying the widow, for the loss of her only son, that son whose tenderness was to have lessened the grief his mother sustained for the loss of his father; when he sees him flying to the relief of this afflicted mourner, and, in tenderness to her sorrows, commanding even death and the grave to give back their prisoner; when the christian sees this, he learns compassion, for the miseries which befall mankind in this wretched world; he
learns

learns to exert his utmost power to remove them. When he sees the holy, unspotted Jesus, tender to the failings of others, and receiving the repenting sinner whenever he returns; the faithful disciple learns to avoid a censorious severity, and trembles to judge, lest he himself should be judged. When he sees his Lord in the habitation of Samaritans, he learns from thence to avoid no man for religious differences, to perform to all the common acts of social humanity, leaving them and their errors to that ruler of mankind, who permits them. When, advancing farther in the mystic life of this holy Saviour, he sees his last sufferings advance; when he sees him afflicted, tormented, breathing out his righteous soul in the midst of torments inexpressible; he learns from thence that sufferings are the lot of men, and that the only wisdom is to submit to the dispensations of God, however painful. When he sees him bearing the malice of men, and returning only good for evil, blessings for curses; he learns from thence to forget every injury, and to wish only for good to the whole creation. In a word, when he sees the humble poverty of the
blessed

bleſſed Jeſus; when he ſees him born in a ſtable, neglected by men, worſhipped by angels; when he ſees him without a place whereon to reſt his head; dying in torture on the croſs, deprived of the light of heaven in his ſoul; dead and buried like the moſt wretched of men; and inſtantly burſting forth from the darkneſs of death, and riſing to life immortal; aſcending, in the miſt of thouſands of worſhipping angels, to the right hand of God, to be cloathed again with power irrefiſtible, with glory eternal, with ſplendour unapproachable; when the chriſtian ſees theſe marvellous ways of God, he adores the wiſdom of his righteous proceedings, prefers not proſperity to adverſity, wiſhes not for riches rather than poverty; but only prays that his ſufferings on earth may lead to glory in heaven; that he may ſo paſs through things temporal, as not hereafter to loſe the precious things eternal.

SER.

S E R M O N X I I .

ISAIAH liii. 5, 6.

He was wounded for our transgressions ; He was bruised for our iniquities : The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

TH E awful mystery of our Redeemer's sufferings demands, *at all times*, our most serious regard ; but is more especially adapted to the contemplation of all who worship the merciful, the almighty Jesus. Reflect on the awful hour when he was nailed to the cross, when he bled and suffered as never man *could* suffer ; when he breathed out his soul, oppressed with the fulness of divine vengeance, and distracted with the guilt of ages.

For a short season then close your senses to the gayer objects that attract them ; and
with

with holy reverence, with the profoundest adoration, follow the suffering, dying Jesus, into the midst of those sacred agonies, that shook the earth to its centre, and that made the everlasting sun withdraw its shining. Pursue this divine sufferer through all the stages of his venerable distresses; and as you advance, bow down before the holy sacrifice who bled and died for your offences. His blessed nature was immaculate, eternal purity: from him angels derived all their holiness; and the saints, that surround the throne of God, are only righteous, because he made them so. Such is the power of his eternal righteousness, that he *consecrates* every creature that approaches him, and renders holy the uncleanest sinner that worships him. Yet, behold the sufferings of this struggling sacrifice; hear his piercing cries, that reach the very throne of the Almighty, and confound the whole course of nature in their passage thither. As you hear these cries, remember they were *your* sins that pierced him; they were *your* transgressions that surrounded him with the darkness of despair. To this unspeakable load of misery every child of Adam hath contributed;
the

the Lord hath laid on the holy Jesus the iniquity of us all. Look up then to this suffering Saviour with repentance and shame, for the sins that nailed him to the cross: look up to him with adoration and love for the mercy and goodness that carried him there. But, before all, if possible, let the inhabitants of this house run to the holy mountain where their Saviour suffered; and there let them learn the guilt of their former lives; there let them learn the vengeance due to sins like theirs. You that have crucified the Son of God afresh; that have put him again to an open shame; that have despised his mighty sorrows, and made a mock of his adorable agonies, to you prophets and evangelists address themselves with tenfold earnestness, as they recount the sufferings of the holy Jesus. Can *you*, whose sins are deeper than the deepest crimson, can *you* look up to the cross and behold the torments of the Son of God without fear and trembling, without reverence and love? Is this sacred mystery nothing to you sinners that pass by? Behold, and see, says this gracious Saviour, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where-

wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. Every pang the holy Jesus sustained should rend *your* hearts with horror ; every cry he uttered should pierce *your* souls with terror and confusion. To assist you in this holy contemplation, I shall turn your attention to some of those awful circumstances, that attended this great event, recorded by our Lord's disciples for the instruction of every age, and every nation ; chiefly dwelling on such particulars, as have a more immediate reference to *you*, as professing christianity.

Oppressed with the prospect of *instant* sufferings, the holy Jesus “ cometh to a
“ place called Gethsemane ; and to the
“ three disciples that attended him he
“ saith, my soul is exceeding sorrowful even
“ unto death.” What agonies did the blessed Jesus now sustain, when the guilt of all mankind was upon him ! When the darkness of death surrounded him ! When the vengeance of the Almighty penetrated his inmost soul ! And the light of heaven had withdrawn itself from him ! Now did he stand in all the collected guilt of human nature, and suffered all the vengeance due
to

to a sinful world ! Now did he sustain all the wrath of the righteous God against unrighteous man ! The fire from heaven had now descended, and was consuming with mortal agonies this powerful sin offering. Thus sinking under the woful load of sin and misery, (sin and misery not *his* but *ours*,) this patient, adorable sufferer, was constrained to cry out, “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.”

Judge, I pray you, of the extremity of these sacred sufferings by the language used to describe them. “ Being in an agony he “ prayed more earnestly : and his sweat was “ as it were great drops of blood falling to “ the ground.” Into the furnace of God’s wrath was he now thrown ; and in the language of prophecy, “ He is poured out “ like water ; his heart is like wax ; it is “ melted in the midst of his body.” But these sacred sorrows that thus afflicted, that thus racked the Holy One of Israel, are not to be described by the tongue of man. It is a subject too awful, and too venerable for human lips ; it is rather to be contemplated in religious, expressive silence, when the soul is free from every tumultuous affection ;
and

and is totally swallowed up in the profound stillness of the most exalted devotion. So far were these sufferings judged by the ancient church to be above the comprehension of men, that the saints of old used to put up this petition to their Lord, “ By
“ thine unknown sorrows and sufferings
“ felt by thee, but not comprehended by
“ us, have mercy upon us, and save us.”

The sacred historian however informs us they were so great, that an angel from heaven was sent down to support his sinking humanity. And with what holy reverence must this heavenly spirit have approached the Son of God, when thus yielding under the load of his sufferings! He who had beheld him in the highest heaven, seated on his eternal throne, and had for ages worshipped him with the profoundest humility; who had with lowly reverence veiled his face, and cast his crown to the ground, while he ascribed glory, and honour, and power to this Creator of all things. How awful must the dispensations of heaven appear to this exalted spirit; when he saw this mighty God, a suffering, trembling man; when he saw his almighty Lord humble
ble

ble himself so far, as to stand in need of the creatures, which himself had formed! But the ways of the Almighty are not to be fathomed even by angels! His wisdom and power are not to be comprehended by the highest order of the heavenly host! They must with us on earth adore what they cannot reach! While we with them are called upon to praise that eternal mercy, which knows no bounds; which, in its gracious operations, proceeds by methods so mysterious!

As we are contemplating this mystery of our Redeemer's sufferings, how are we overwhelmed with reverence, when we read that his accusers spit upon, buffeted, and smote with the palms of their hands the God of men and angels! How are we astonished at their audacious impiety, when, having blindfolded this gracious Saviour, they smote him, and wantonly bid him prophesy, who it was that smote him! How are we amazed, when, having mocked him with a robe of dignity, and pierced his sacred temples with a crown of thorns, they bowed their unhallowed knees before him, and tauntingly cried out, "Hail,
" king

“ king of the Jews !” How are we confounded at the impiety of man ! How are we astonished at the meekness of the blessed Jesus ; who did not command the whole host of heaven to confound them ; and the breath of the Almighty to blast them !

From this scene of abomination they lead the Saviour of mankind to the sacred mountain, where the redemption of finners was accomplished. “ And when they were
“ come to the place which is called Calvary,
“ there they crucified him, and two male-
“ factors with him ; one on the right hand,
“ and the other on the left.” Blessed Jesus ! permit us to adore this stupendous mystery of love ! This *almost excess* of mercy ! Permit us to fall at the foot of thy blessed cross, and to lift up our eyes overwhelmed with sorrow and shame, while we behold thy immaculate purity degraded down to the pollution of the most polluted finners ! While this eternal sacrifice is hanging upon the cross, the object of worship to angels and archangels, observe the madness of man, and hear the reproaches they utter : even his gracious goodness, his divine mercy, is turned against him, and made
matter

matter of horrid blasphemy: “ He saved
“ others,” they cry, “ himself he cannot
“ save.” What! is it a reproach to give
fight to the blind, hearing to the deaf,
speech to the dumb, and life to the dead?
He *did* save others, and yet, in the depth of
his divine wisdom, he will not save himself
in the way, which the wantonness of sinners
shall point out. He is contented to breathe
out his soul upon the cross, and to stop for
a moment that eternal fountain of life,
which flows through the various regions of
created nature. But the Almighty had pre-
pared the most alarming solemnities for this
awful season. For while this precious sa-
crifice hung upon the cross, the sun with-
drew his light from heaven; as if it had
been ashamed to behold its Creator’s suf-
ferings: For “ from the sixth hour there
“ was darkness over all the land unto the
“ ninth hour.” And when he cried with
a loud voice, and yielded up the ghost,
“ Behold the vail of the temple was rent
“ in twain, from the top to the bottom;
“ and the earth did quake; and the rocks
“ rent; and the graves were opened, and
“ many bodies of saints which slept arose.”

Mighty miracles indeed! But mighty things were then transacting! The God of Ages had assumed the nature of man, and in that nature was suffering, bleeding, dying. Was not this enough to stop the heavenly bodies in their courses; and to confound the whole order of the creation?

But grand and awful as this amazing succession of events is, I shall leave the further consideration thereof to your private, and most serious meditation; and shall turn myself to observe on some circumstances, which are in a more peculiar manner adapted to the place where I now speak; to the sinners that inhabit this house. To you then that totter on the brink of destruction, the sad fate of the traitor Judas reads the most wholesome lessons. Like you, he had been graciously called by the Saviour of the world to hear his holy wisdom, to learn his righteous will. Day after day this merciful Lord had revealed to him the counsels of eternity; had unveiled to him the mysterious secrets of his holy parables. What was denied to others was granted to him; and the Saviour of the world tenderly led him by the hand in the paths of truth and
righteous-

righteousness. With equal mercy hath Jesus Christ condescended to *your* infirmities. He both separated you from the pollution of your former lives ; and hath snatched you from the lowest sink of corruption and misery. Instead of the horrid blasphemies that heretofore surrounded you, the great and blessed truths of the gospel are calmly and wisely conveyed to your untutored minds. Your weaknesses are borne with ; for the power of your evil habits, formerly contracted, allowance is made ; your faintest tendency to purity and devotion is cherished and applauded ; the return of sinners to repentance and to God is constantly held forth for your encouragement ; you are daily led by the hand of heavenly charity to this holy house of prayer, here to lament and deplore your past offences ; here to bewail your former transgressions ; here to cry aloud for help from heaven, whereby you may rise victorious over all the powerful corruptions of your nature. In a word, all that God can do, by such weak instruments as His creatures on earth, is done for your salvation. But if you neglect these precious opportunities, if again you return

to your former filthiness of life, read your own fate in that of your predecessor Judas; who, distracted with the vengeance of God, plunged himself into hell to find relief for his tortured soul; and sought refuge, even amidst the horrors and darkness of the damned, from those terrors, with which the angry hand of the Almighty had pierced him. And still, and still his holy vengeance hangs over hardened finners, and will at last burst forth in all its irresistible fury on the soul that sets at nought the various offers of his mercy. But may these things ever be foreign to *your* case; may *you* contrariwise imitate another and far different example, mercifully recorded, with all its beautiful and edifying circumstances, as it were, for the more peculiar instruction of this house. The example I mean is that of Mary Magdalene; who, throughout the whole sacred account, appears an attendant in every period of her Saviour's sufferings. Notwithstanding the impious rabble that surrounded him, we find her standing by the cross of the crucified Jesus. And with what reverence, think you, did this repentant, afflicted sinner, look up to her
gracious

gracious Lord ! What were the sorrows of her heart, when they tore his sacred temples with thorns ; when they nailed his holy hands and feet to the cross ; when they pierced his side with a spear ; when in the horrors of his adorable desolation he cried out, “ My God, my God, why hast thou “ forsaken me.” What were the agonies of her soul, when she knew that in this righteous Saviour was no guile ; that not for himself he bled, but that for her these sufferings were sustained ; but that from her guilt these sorrows flowed ! Though Judas betrayed him ; though Peter denied him ; though all his disciples forsook him ; yet the afflicted Magdalene, overwhelmed with gratitude and sorrow, is not to be removed from the dying Jesus. She stays to penetrate her heart with every pang ; to partake of every sorrow of her merciful Saviour. While the sun withdrew his light from heaven, and the earth trembled and quaked, with reverence of the holy death that was approaching, she continued worshipping her mighty, dying Lord, at the foot of his sacred cross. Nay, when nature had failed under the heavy load

that had oppressed it, and the temple of his body was deserted by the High Inhabitant that had possessed it, still she is inseparable from all that remained of her tender Redeemer on earth. When he is laid in his grave, we are told, that Mary Magdalene still sits over against his sepulchre. There, in that day of darkness, she learnt the guilt of her own sins; the justice of the Almighty; and above all, she learnt, she saw the unbounded mercy of the holy Jesus. There she meditated on what ought to be the subject of *your* daily meditation: she dwelt on the mercy of that departed Saviour, who had pardoned her numerous iniquities, and had extended his tenderest compassion towards her various corruptions. When rejected and despised by others; when branded with the hateful appellations of sinner and unclean, the holy Jesus still had pity upon her, and accepted and applauded all the marks of her humble penitence. She remembered, when with fear and trembling she had dared to approach his holy presence, and to wash his blessed feet with the tears of guilt and sorrow. She remembered when this immaculate Saviour of the world encouraged

raged her fearful approach ; nay, when he employed his eternal wisdom in her behalf, and himself vouchsafed to undertake and plead her sad cause. She remembered, when he did, in a manner before his time, exercise the high character of judge of the world, and did in the fulness of his authority pronounce her sins forgiven, and seal her everlasting peace. Again she called to remembrance, how from his sacred lips she had learned the lessons of eternal purity ; how he had raised her to pursue every christian grace ; how he had led her step by step to the acquisition of every virtue that shines in saints or angels. And as she contemplates this abundance of goodness, who can wonder that she is inseparable from the grave of the departed Jesus. The evangelists delight to dwell upon the faithful attendance of this sinner there, and hold her forth to the view of all generations, as the first and leading character, officiating in all the awful solemnities of this season. If she leaves the sepulchre for a moment, it is only that she may still more express the devotion of her heart ; that she may bring still fresh proofs of the gratitude of her soul.

For

For, at the very approach of the dawn, that her zeal may be the more like that of the angels, who descended to attend at the glories of the resurrection; at the very approach of dawn she is found again at the holy sepulchre, loaded with spices and ointments. All the rich perfumes of the east but faintly represented the eternal holiness of the blessed Jesus, which purifies the things in heaven, and the things on earth. But still what can be done, this penitent sinner does, to express the righteousness of *him*, who had rendered even *her* righteous; to proclaim the powerful holiness of him, who had rendered even such a sinner as her holy in the sight of heaven. To the sinners of this house, who have sinned after the likeness of her transgression, do I hold forth the bright example of her holy zeal, if haply ye may be led to follow it. For *your* instruction is recorded the conduct of this eminent saint, raised from pollutions foul as yours; and rescued from the self-same dangers that surrounded *you*. It was her deep repentance; it was her holy sorrow; it was her perfect change of life; it was her love of the Saviour, who had re-
deemed

deemed her, that ranked her amongst the holiest saints that followed the blessed Jesus on earth ; that afterwards placed her among the brightest angels, with whom she now worships and adores, and will for ever worship in the courts of heaven. Animated by the greatness of this example, do ye sinners, who have *begun* the solemn work of repentance ; whose crimes have led you here, far away from the view of your fellow creatures, to lament your sins in silence and solitude ; do ye press after the high perfection of Mary's repentance. And as an encouragement to this blessed, though difficult work, behold how it stands recorded in the Book of Life, that the Saviour of the world, after his triumphant resurrection, *first* appeared to Mary Magdalene. Surrounded, as he was, with the glories of eternity, he yet saw, and pitied, and revered the sorrows of her heart. He knew the afflictions of her wounded spirit ; and he hastened to reveal, to this mournful sinner, the almighty power of the Saviour in whom she had believed. It is not to the *innocence* of his favourite disciple ; it is not to the *ardent zeal* of Peter ; it is not to the
venerable

venerable purity of his blessed mother, that he first reveals himself: but for the eternal comfort of the penitent and afflicted sinners that inhabit this house, it is to Mary Magdalene that he *first* appeared after his resurrection; and thereby proclaimed aloud this comfortable truth, that sinners like her, when penitents like her, are ranked among the purest angels that surround the throne of God.

SER-

S E R M O N XIII.

LUKE xvii. 17, 18.

And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

THE life and actions of Jesus Christ are recorded for the edification of mankind. Each particular in that illustrious life abounds with profitable instruction. All he did, at the same time that it strengthens our faith in his heavenly mission, contributes also to the direction of our lives, and to the high improvement of our conduct. If we trace this great exemplar from the humility of his birth in the stable, till we see him on the cross; in every step he teaches, and he instructs in the same spirit with which he spoke, when he delivered on the mount the purest and the sublimest truths, that ever reached the ears of men. His blessed business was to call men to God; and in this
great

great work his precepts and his example unite with equal energy. You cannot be employed with more edification to yourselves, than in viewing the life of your Saviour in this light. When you read it in private for your instruction, I earnestly recommend it to you to meditate on each part, as you advance; till you feel yourselves warmed with the spirit thereof, and animated to pursue those virtues which your Lord displays. By this means you will reverence him aright. By this conduct you will preach his faith to others. Thus, when in your closet you read of the humility of your Saviour; and find that, in obedience to the divine appointments, he so submitted to the lowest poverty, so far beyond the common distress thereof, that he was even born in a stable; then pause in silence, and learn what submission you owe to the divine will, if that sees fit to deprive you of the outward comforts of life. You are but like the Son of God; the hand that afflicts you, afflicted him before you; he bowed before the divine dispensation; joyfully submitted to it, and was made perfect through suffering. With power from on high he anointed his
evan-

evangelists to record the splendour of his virtues, that you might copy after them, and be perfect. Thus will every part of your Saviour's life afford you the most solid instruction. If you thus read, thus meditate, and thus imitate, each day you will advance from virtue to virtue; and when in your closet you have contemplated and admired the sacred example of your Saviour, in the divine strength you will then go forth into the world to practise the same good works; to pursue the same righteous conduct. — One of these instructive narrations I have selected for your present meditation; hoping that it may induce you to read the holy scriptures in this spirit; hoping that you may be led hereby not to let the reading of them degenerate into a dry, lifeless, daily task; but that you may read them with the gravest attention for your own instruction; and that when you have seen what virtues the holy Jesus practised, you may go and do the same.

The passage I have at present selected, contains an account of the cure of the ten leprous persons, who besought our Lord to heal them. This sublime teacher, according
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ing to his wonted manner, ascended from the things and persons before him, to places and ages the most remote. He healed *them*, and he instructed *us*. His benevolence was not to be confined; but flowed out from Judea to the utmost ends of the earth. Let us pass through the narration, step by step, and each of you endeavour to learn some of that wisdom, which it is intended to teach you.

The narration informs us, “ that as our
“ Lord entered into a certain village, there
“ met him ten men that were lepers, which
“ stood afar off, and lifted up their voices,
“ and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on
“ us.” Their distress drove them to seek for assistance. Had they not wanted his help, they had disregarded the power and the mercy of our Redeemer. It was their affliction that taught them to cry for assistance to him, that was able to give it. Thus does it happen daily among men. The goodness of that gracious God, which so abundantly supplies our world with its various riches, is not felt while those riches are enjoyed. You see the seasons beautifully rise up in their order; you see summer and
winter

winter each succeed the other with uninterrupted regularity; you see the earth pouring forth its rich abundance, to make glad the heart of man; and yet how faintly are your souls impressed with gratitude towards that almighty power, which graciously guideth these seasons in their splendid revolutions? When you are enjoying the richest of the earth's productions, how rarely does your heart ascend with ardent gratitude to bow down before the throne of the Almighty, who has given to your earth its fertility by the sun he has caused to shine; by the rain he has commanded to descend. It is not in abundance you generally learn to praise the Lord of Nature. You then feel His power, when He with-holds His goodness. When the earth is unable to yield her fruits, it is then you acknowledge that the earth is the Lord's; and that He executeth His pleasure therein without controul. Thus, again, in health of body, how rarely do you praise your great Creator; who watcheth over your frame with paternal care, and preserves that nice and complicated machine from the various harms to which it is exposed? How rarely do you cast
your

your eyes back on those years, through which you have passed, to praise the almighty arm that has tenderly conducted you through infancy and youth; and that has richly showered down His blessings upon you in the advanced seasons of life? It is on the bed of sickness, you generally first learn to adore the eternal Fountain of Life, from whence you are supplied. It is the fear of losing, not gratitude for the enjoyment, that makes you address your petitions to the Father of Mankind. It is not thankfulness for the past, but fearfulness for the future, that makes you send up your cries to heaven. Then indeed, in those grave days, when the blessings of God are withdrawn, when the hand of the Almighty afflicts, something like devotion appears. You cannot but feel the power that lies heavy upon you; you cannot, you dare not but bow down and adore the God who may, for what you know, the next moment destroy you. Just so, we are told, the lepers, by the calamity of their condition, were driven to acknowledge the power, and to solicit the help of Jesus Christ. It was in the bitterness of their calamity, “ that they lifted up
“ their

“ their voices, and said, Jesus, Master,
“ have mercy on us. And when he saw
“ them, he said unto them, Go, shew your-
“ selves unto the priests. And it came to
“ pass that as they went, they were cleansed.
“ And one of them, when he saw that he
“ was healed, turned back, and with a
“ loud voice glorified God: and he was a
“ Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said,
“ Were there not ten cleansed? but where
“ are the nine? There are not found that
“ returned to give glory to God, save this
“ stranger.” A dismal picture of the ingra-
titude of men! A living figure of what is
daily passing in the world around us!

These ungrateful persons, who were just
healed, and had in a moment forgot the
gracious power that healed them, had been
instructed in the truths of religion from
their earliest years; in the temple they had
heard the praises of their God proclaim-
ed from day to day; and had been instructed
in the wonders of his power. Their great
law-giver had ascended even to the solem-
nity of the creation, that he might celebrate
the majesty of Jehovah. He had repre-
sented our world and every heavenly orb

starting into being, in obedience to their Creator's voice. He had recorded the singular mercy of heaven towards the descendants of Abraham, in protecting them from generation to generation; till he had guided them into the promised land; where he enlightened them with truth unknown to other regions; where he revealed his statutes unto Jacob, and his ordinances unto Israel. Every year their solemn festivals brought back the memory of these grand interpositions of the Almighty in their favour; and every morning and evening sacrifice was meant to impress on their hearts the profoundest reverence, and the warmest gratitude, towards the Almighty. But how little had they profited from these uninterrupted instructions? How little wisdom had they learnt from the sublime exhortations of their prophets, who, all on fire with the importance of their high commission, had with the utmost vehemence of spirit, with the utmost pomp of language, summoned the inhabitants of Judea to make the whole world resound with the praises of God; who, in the unbounded energy of their own devotion, had required that every thing that had breath should praise the Lord?

Lord? Yet, in this school was learnt no gratitude to heaven. The *form* of the temple service was observed; but its divine spirit was not imbibed. For of all that had been there instructed, not *one* was found that returned to give glory to God; who had delivered them from one of the forest afflictions of human nature. How unhappily is the church of Judea resembled by the christian church! How fatally like is man to man in *depravity*! *You* also are summoned to the temples of the living God, where you hear His goodness proclaimed, His power celebrated, and where you are commanded to bow down before His eternal and unbounded perfections. Here you are told, that before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, that He is God from everlasting, and world without end. Here you are commanded with your own lips to acknowledge, “that in the hands of God are all the corners of the earth; and that the strength of the hills is His also: that the sea is His, and He made it: and that His hands prepared the dry land.” Who would not expect, that before such a power the fee-

bleness of man should tremble? Who would think, that a creature, in the hands of such a mighty God, would ever speak of Him, would ever think of Him, but, if possible, with excess of reverence, with the humblest, lowliest adoration? Yet, with the sound perishes the impression. For no sooner are you departed from these walls, than again His sacred name is blasphemed; than again it is treated as a common thing. What profits it, that you acknowledge that the earth trembled and quaked? That the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord; at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth? What avails this empty, momentary homage, when there remains behind no *abiding* reverence of this almighty power, on whose awful sentence depends the eternal fate of man? Who that heard the impiety, with which the name of the God of Nature is mentioned among christian men, would ever be led to think, that these very men were taught to acknowledge that holy and reverend is His name; and that these very men even called on others, in their temples, to ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto His name? Such unprofitable worship is empty

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ty pageantry. The God that made you, and that daily preserves you, is not to be adored at intervals, is not to be revered at times. Every moment His goodness is flowing down upon you; every instant you stand a monument of His almighty power. Every moment therefore is a sabbath most solemn, in which His glory is to be proclaimed; every place is a temple most sacred, from whence His praise is to ascend from earth to heaven. Yes; it is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God! Yes; all nature is Thy temple! All time Thy sabbath! From these walls then carry out the profoundest reverence of your God: here learn what you are to practice every where else, and for ever. Remember the solemnity of the worship you here pay, when you declare to your God sentiments like these; “Lo, there
“is not a word in my tongue, but Thou,
“O Lord, knowest it altogether. Whither
“shall I go then from Thy spirit? or whither
“shall I go then from Thy presence?
“If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there:

“ if I go down to hell, Thou art there also.
“ If I take the wings of the morning, and
“ remain in the uttermost parts of the sea;
“ even there also shall Thy hand lead me;
“ and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I
“ say, Peradventure the *darkness* shall cover
“ me; then shall my night be turned to
“ day. For the darkness is no darkness to
“ Thee; but the night is as clear as the day;
“ yea, the darkness and light to Thee are
“ both alike.” To such a God, the Judge
of all men, what obedience is due? What
reverence do you owe? Who would not
think that christians, persuaded of such
truths, would not only shew forth the divine
praises with their lips, but in their lives?
When, by their own confession, there is not
an action of their lives, a word of their
mouths, or a thought of their hearts, but
their God knoweth it altogether! Let it not
be said, that among christian men, more
than elsewhere, the name of the Almighty is
profaned; let it not be said that, satisfied
with the poor external of religion, christians
disregard the spirit thereof; and far beyond
any others, make a mock of the mighty,
sacred object of all religion. Let not such
reproach

reproach be thrown on the disciples of the holy Jesus, as if they were impious beyond other men. Even *Nature* teaches adoration and gratitude towards the Lord of Nature. He that formed us has woven into our frame a profound reverence of the great former; and has implanted in us irradicable, grateful sentiments, for all His goodness to us. He would not send us into His world without this inward witness of Himself. Thus you see, though the Jews learnt no humility, no gratitude, yet the *Samaritan*, ignorant as he was *then* thought, misinformed as he is *now* reckoned, yet the *Samaritan* was deeply impressed with *both*. The Almighty himself taught him; and he was obedient to the divine instructor. The pride of religion would make the Jews brand him with the factious name of heretic, or schismatic; but were he heretic, or schismatic, he offered to heaven as grateful a sacrifice, as was ever laid on the altar at Jerusalem, by prophet, or by saint. The contentions about the *forms* of religion destroy its essence. Each sect, in the pride of its heart, contends vehemently for its particular notions, and judges of all mankind from the reception,
or

or rejection of them. But religion consists not in notions. The sublime truths of heaven are but dimly revealed to the most enlightened of mankind. Their high exaltation makes it perhaps impossible, that much of them should be made known to us in the present poverty of the human mind. Their splendour would dazzle the infirmity of our intellectual powers. Little room is there for contest, therefore, about such matters. Points of speculation are by the best-informed to be proposed with timidity. Much wiser is the humble worshipper of the Almighty, who bows down before him [with fearful silence, than the audacious religionist, who presumes to define his God; who undertakes to explain the Eternal to creatures of a day's duration; and who presumes to make known to man celestial truths, which the purity and sublimity of angels themselves cannot comprehend. This is the boldness of ignorance; this the profanation of religion; this the imposture of deceivers. And let such instructors claim what authority they may, still will we send them to the out-casts of the church to learn wisdom. Authorised by the example of
Jesus

Jesus Christ, we will send them to the Samaritan to find out how to worship. Tho' your church was pure, without spot or imperfection, yet, if your heart is not turned to God, the worship is hateful; and the prayers are an abomination. The homage of the darkeſt Pagan, worſhipping he knows not what, but ſtill worſhipping the unknown power that formed him, if he bows with humility, if he praiſes with gratitude; his homage will aſcend grateful up to heaven; while the dead, careleſs formality of prayer, offered up in the proudeſt chriſtian temples, ſhall be rejected as an offering unholy. For think you that the Almighty eſteems names and ſects? No; it is the *heart* that He requires; it is the *heart* alone that He accepts. And much conſolation does this afford to the contemplative mind of man. We may be very ignorant in ſpiritual matters, if *that* ignorance cannot be removed, and yet may be very ſafe. We may not know in what words to cloath our deſires in prayer; or where to find language worthy of being preſented to the Majeſty of heaven. But, amidſt the clouds that ſurround us, here is our comfort;

fort ; in every nation, he that worshippeth with humility worshippeth aright ; he that praiseth with gratitude praiseth well. The pride of establishments may despise him ; but the wisdom and the righteousness of heaven will hear, and will approve him. It was to the humble, thankful Samaritan, though separated from the true church ; yet it was to him alone, because he alone returned to glorify God, that Jesus Christ said, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. Thus, in a moment vanished, and became of no effect, the temple of the Jews, built by prophetic direction ; its ritual given by their illuminated legislator ; all gave way to the profound humility, and the sublime gratitude of what *they* called an unbeliever ; of what Jesus Christ called the only faithful servant of God amongst them. Thus does this doctrine afford solid comfort to us, when doubts arise, through the activity of the mind, lest there should be ought of imperfection in our worship ; lest there should be ought presented by us in our religious adorations, unworthy of the awful majesty of Him, that dwelleth in the splendour of eternal, uncreated light. Grand
and

and solemn truly is the act, when we worship this adorable power. But, in the riches of His mercy, He accepts as perfect the sincerity of prayer, and the praises that proceed from gratitude of heart. From this doctrine too may you derive much instruction for yourselves. It is not the purity of your faith; it is not the rectitude of your worship, that recommends you to your God. It is the spirit with which that worship is presented; it is the fruits which *that* faith produces. If you boast that you know more of the Almighty than others, and see his splendid dispensations clearer; in the name of that God, whose light converts and instructs, shew by your lives the superiority of your knowledge. If christian faith be purer, let christian lives be better. For be assured, that for the want of humility no belief is an atonement; that for the want of devotion no prayers, whatever they contain, or to whomsoever they are addressed, can make a compensation. The humility of the most ignorant, and the devotion of those that are most in error, shall be accepted, and rewarded; while those that boast the purity of their faith, and yet approach

proach the God of heaven and earth with irreverent negligence, shall be condemned in the presence of men and angels, as profaning the worship of the Almighty; as blaspheming that sacred, adorable power, which demands as the only acceptable homage, as the only grateful service, the humblest, profoundest adoration of all His creatures.

SER-

S E R M O N XIV.

I. PETER ii. 21, 22, 23.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously.

ALL the works of God are great and wonderful; wherever we attentively turn our eyes, they are dazzled with the wisdom and goodness that discover themselves. The heaven above and the earth beneath are always proclaiming the glory of Him that made them. Whether we look *within* us, or *without* us, the same overflowings of goodness, the same marks of wisdom appear. The Lord hath richly supplied us with comfort to relieve us, in our passage through a state, where He designs that much should be suffered. He hath scattered
abroad

abroad His favours plentifully, and hath done great things to support the heart of man. The whole universe conspires to celebrate His praise, from whom it derives all its majesty and beauty. The sun that shines in brightness declares the ineffable splendour of its almighty Creator; and the moon and stars proclaim to the understanding heart, the adorable power of the hand that guides them. The earth, so richly stocked with productions of higher and lower rank, with the various kinds of vegetable and animal life, paint, in strongest colours, the amazing fruitfulness of that mysterious Divine Nature, from whence issues all that adorns the earth, and delights the senses. He only spoke, and the lights of heaven shone forth in the firmament; He only commanded, and the earth poured forth its richest fruits. The universe is a palace of the Most High, in which His ministers faithfully discharge their Master's commands, and administer to those He has appointed to dwell there. But if we want to penetrate into the *depths* of divine mercy; if we have a mind to gaze upon the love of God, which passeth all understanding,

standing, we must then, with profound humility and lowly reverence, turn our eyes to the divine subject of man's redemption, accomplished by the mysterious crucifixion of the ever-blessed Son of God. Here we shall see enough to raise our highest admiration, and to make us cry out with the worshipping psalmist, "Lord, what is man, " that Thou art thus mindful of him; or " the son of man, that Thou thus regard- " est him!" What is this weak, wretched creature of clay, that thou shouldst thus exalt him; that Thou shouldst thus adorn him with Thy richest mercies! It is for us that Christ has suffered; that the eternal God, whom no mortal eye can behold, who is light, and glory, and beauty, from everlasting to everlasting, vouchsafed to unite Himself to a frail mortal body, and to undergo all those weaknesses to which we are appointed, that he might fill us full of grace and truth, of life and power. It was for us that this mighty Saviour went through those heavy sufferings, which begun when he was laid in the manger, and ceased not till he breathed forth his last on the cross. It was for the happiness of man, that he in
mercy

mercy underwent all those heavy sufferings, which the disciple has described, in the chapter from whence the words of the text are taken. Though over all God blessed for ever! He was yet despised and rejected of men; though the King of kings and Lord of lords, He was yet a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. You need but take a slight view of some of the principal parts of the divine life of the blessed Jesus, in order to see how truly he was a man of sorrows, and how deeply he was acquainted with grief. Your hearts must be harder than the rock of flint, if they do not melt with the tenderest love towards that blessed Saviour, who suffered all this for your sakes, who gave himself up to poverty, sickness, grief, and shame, that he might make you the children of God, and exalt you to everlasting life. Look at this Saviour of Mankind in the first and earliest steps of his humiliation, and see whether greater wretchedness and lower misery can any where be seen, than that to which he was born. None could even be found to perform the smallest acts of humanity towards him, to administer the common offices that

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even nature directs should be performed on such occasions. He who had sat on the throne of heaven, from the inconceivable depth of eternity, came for the most gracious purposes among his own creatures, and his own received him not. No better place of reception was afforded to the Lord of Life than a wretched stable; no nobler earthly attendants surrounded him, if you except his own despised relations, than the beasts of the field. Thus early did the Son of man begin to suffer for us; thus did he, from his birth, begin to preach the way to glory, by teaching us a contempt of worldly greatness, by bringing to shame the pride and vanity of man. And as was the beginning of this wonderful life, so was every future step thereof. The star that rose in clouds, advanced in its course, obscured with mists and vapours, till at last it set in blackness of darkness. For Christ thus continued to suffer for us by undergoing all that poverty and reproach can bring along with them. His youth was spent in a mean and laborious employment; nor was there any form or comeliness in his outward man, that when we saw him we should desire

him. Thus did he pass his early life, unheeded by all about him; till he begun the business for which he came from heaven, till he sounded the gospel trumpet, and proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord; till he summoned Jew and Greek, bond and free, to taste and see how gracious the Lord is; till he published the divine message of salvation to every creature, and spoke peace to them that were afar off, as well as to them that were near. Then did the powers of darkness rise up against him; then did the enemy rage with all his strength. Who is this, said the haughty priests, and the puffed up pharisee, that pretends to teach the way of God to us, the favourites of heaven? Whence hath this carpenter's son these mighty gifts; or how should he attain the wisdom only taught in our schools? Is not his mean birth and low education a thing we have all been witness to? Shall such an one seat himself in the prophet's chair, and point out truth to us, his teachers? — Hardly had this incarnate word of God delivered his first message; hardly had he given the first alarm, “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand,”

"hand," when chief priests and elders, scribes and pharisees were assembled together to oppose the will of Heaven, and to withhold the choicest blessings from mankind. This seducer, this perverter of the people, cried they, must be removed, for all men follow him. No sooner had these haughty wretches thus determined, than they set themselves to defame and blacken him who did no sin, and in whose mouth no guile was found. He that spake as never man spake, who was the word and the truth of God, was treated as a vile deceiver, and persecuted as the basest impostor. He that had all power in heaven and in earth, who could still the raging sea, and hush the stormy winds, who could enlighten the blind eye, and open the deaf ear, who could restore health to the sick, and life to the dead; he who was entrusted with all these powers, and with others infinitely greater, was yet stupidly and wickedly called a blasphemer of the most High God. No wisdom could silence these objectors; no tenderness could soften their hearts; no meekness could appease their raging anger. Thus did their hearts burn within them,

till the fire was quenched by the blood of this lamb of God. And now began the last and bitter season, the dark and mournful conclusion of this wretched life. He, who had lived to bless and comfort mankind, was now to be forsaken of all, was to be given up to the madness of his implacable enemies, without receiving the least comfort from man, or, what is unspeakably heavier, without beholding the chearful light of heaven, to relieve his sorrows. He is betrayed by one of his faithless followers, and given up into the hands of his enemies, with the bitterest and most insulting circumstances. Immediately all his disciples forsake him, except one who staid to deny him, with oaths and curses. Then is he accused of sedition, treason, and blasphemy, and hurried from bar to bar, till at last they get the sentence passed, and he that is the life of the whole creation was condemned to die on the cross. Then do they mock, spit upon, and buffet him, cloath him in garments of mock majesty, and pierce his sacred head with thorns. Then do they bow the knee before him in contempt, and smite him with the palms of their hands. Then
did

did he patiently give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. But who can sufficiently adore this mystery? For this suffering, afflicted person, is no less than the Son of God, is no less than the Holy One of Israel. What merciful forbearance, what amazing condescension is here. He is led like the helpless lamb to the slaughter, as if he had no power to deliver him, while all in heaven, and all on earth, and all beneath the earth, breathe but by his permission. The hand that smote him was lifted up by his power; the tongue that blasphemed him moved by his permission; and they that nailed him to the cross, from day to day derived their life from him. Here was a mystery that angels were amazed at; that the Lord of the Universe should be the scorn of mortal man; that he whom the whole host of heaven worshipped and adored in humble silence, should be mocked, spit upon, and buffeted, by the lowest of his own creation. This was the unfathomable abyss of divine love; this the lowest depth of eternal mercy. This it was that led the Son of God to the cross, to which his hands and feet were nailed like

those of the vilest criminal; where his side was pierced; and, above all, where God withdrew the light of His countenance from him, and plunged him into spiritual darkness. With these heavy sufferings it was, that man was redeemed from death; thus was he delivered from misery and restored to life everlasting. Who now hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Who hath faith to penetrate into the depth of this divine mystery, and to see the Creator of heaven and earth in the lowly form of the crucified Galilean; and to behold the God of Endless Ages under the uncomely appearance of Jesus of Nazareth?

Let us now see how far we have ourselves followed the great example here set before us; for when our blessed Lord thus purchased immortality for us by his all-atoning blood, he also left us a pattern that we ourselves must follow; for we must here, as in every thing else be like him, who when he was oppressed and afflicted, yet opened not his mouth. A pattern this, I am afraid, we shall see but ill observed. For who among us gives proofs of this forbearing,
for-

forgiving temper? Who is there that with meekness and silence passes by the injuries he receives, and in the mean time possesses his soul in peace and quietness? Who is there that greatly overlooks the affronts he meets with, and disdains to harbour in his breast the least malice or unkindness for him that injures him? Is this the ruling spirit of those that call themselves christians? Is this the conduct of those that make their boast they are baptized into the name of Christ? Or are we not obliged to say in honest truth, that east and west, north and south, heaven and earth, are not more distant, than the practice of Christ, and the practice of those that impudently call themselves christians? What do we daily see and hear in the world, but injuries complained of, injuries repaid to the last mite? To forgive is now deemed a weakness; and he that resents most is esteemed the wisest. Hardly will any acknowledgment appease the wrath of man, nor less satisfy him than the extremest misery of the unhappy wretch that gave the offence. The least word, not perhaps at all attended to by him that spoke it, is now
enough

enough to raise up an everlasting enmity, and to change the love and harmony of neighbours into the rage and madness of beasts of prey. The soul of man is grown too lofty to *condescend*, nor will it even hearken to the God that formed it, if He commands submission. We have many who are not ashamed, nay, who make their boast that they will sacrifice their lives to this dark principle of revenge, and who will plunge their souls into outward darkness, rather than imitate the heavenly virtues of their divine Saviour, who, when he was oppressed and afflicted, yet opened not his mouth. And this unseemly spirit, so unfit for such a contemptible wretch as man, has run through and polluted all orders and degrees of men amongst us. There is none but what is too high to receive an injury, without repaying it; none but what will labour with unwearied pains to return evil for evil. But is this, think you, the life to which you are called? Is this the spirit you are designed to breathe? Is this to follow your quiet, suffering Saviour? Can you possibly impose upon yourselves so much, as to think you are the disciples of
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the blessed Jesus, when you are so utterly unlike him? You may indeed be called christians, for it is an easy matter to call light, darkness; and darkness, light; good, evil; and evil, good; but still, light and good are themselves the same, and are not altered by our ignorance: they still continue just as different from darkness and evil, whatever we may call them, as a passionate, revengeful man does from a christian. But so much has the christian world now departed from this holy spirit of its Saviour, that one seems to be delivering a strange and new doctrine, when one commands people to forget the injuries they have received. Hence it appears, that though we have a form of godliness, we have not the power; we adhere to forms and are zealous for opinions; this we hope will pass for christianity, and excuse us for not embracing the spirit of Christ. But remember, before it be too late, that obedience is better than sacrifice. And who art thou, O man, that darest to plan out another method of salvation, that canst find out another way to life, than that which Jesus Christ has appointed? He that hopes for happiness must arrive

arrive at it by the narrow path of conformity in all things with the Son of God. He was made like unto us, that we might be made like unto him; and though we, or an angel from heaven preach unto you any other gospel than this, let him be accursed. Be not amused with I know not what dream, that all may be well, though you differ entirely from the spirit of your Saviour. For this is the fatal and deplorable doctrine of antichrist. It is this that lays waste the church of Christ, in this our day, and turns the fruitful vineyard of the Lord into a barren land. You will perhaps depend upon the opinion of the world, and think that all can never err. If you do this, you may then revenge like an unconverted heathen; you may follow the multitude, but be assured it is to do evil. For let God be true, and every man a liar; He requires forgiveness at your hands in the plainest and clearest terms; and has commanded you to reject, as corrupt and abominable, the distorted doctrines of those who would reconcile the passions of men with the exalted purity of the gospel life. Heaven and earth may pass away, but one
tittle

tittle of all that Jesus Christ has said, of all that he requires, can never fail. Remember then, that it is not crying out, Lord, Lord; or conforming to an outward religion, that makes a christian, and secures your happiness. You must proceed much farther than this; you must in all things conform to the spirit of Christ, however different that may be from the opinion and esteem of the world: you must dare like him to live a life devoted to God, separate from the world; acting only as heavenly charity directs, not daring to return evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing: not daring to differ from the divine example of him, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; who, when he suffered, threatened not; then may you safely commit yourselves, all you have, and all you are, to Him that judgeth righteously.

SER-

S E R M O N XV.

PSALM xxiii. 1, 2, 3.

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He
maketh me to lie down in green pastures.
He leadeth me beside the still waters. He
restoreth my soul.*

IN this psalm you have the perfect consolation of christianity, beginning with the supply of grace here, and reaching to the full completion of glory hereafter. By the light of Christ's religion, and by the light of that alone it is, that men can live securely and confidently here, or entertain any hopes of an otherwise uncertain hereafter. And this consolation and these hopes are, in this psalm, described in so noble and glorious a manner, so suitably to the mercy of the blessed spirit who inspired it, that I shall go through the whole psalm, in order to explain to you the divine and comfortable truths it contains, that you may be earnestly desirous of sharing in that which alone

alone is valuable, the redemption of Christ, the favour of God, and the consolation of his Holy Spirit. These are the subjects of this psalm; and these are the only things that will sweeten the bitter cup of life; that will afford true uninterrupted comfort in the expectation; and real, solid, eternal satisfaction in the enjoyment. All possible thanks, adoration, and praise, therefore, be ascribed unto God, who, like a kind shepherd, mercifully guides us through this vale, and suffers us not to err from the path of life; who supplies us with water from the living fountain of his Christ, when we wander through the barren wilderness of the world; who maketh his sun, his glorious sun of righteousness to rise upon us, to direct our steps, and comfort our hearts; who, in one word, conducts us safe through the valley of the shadow of death, and brings us to the enjoyment of his heavenly sabbath, his uninterrupted rest, which shall be enjoyed in the house of the Lord for ever!

Before I begin to explain the psalm itself, I must observe, that though I shall in the present discourse apply this psalm to every indi-

individual member of the christian church, in order to make it more generally useful, yet I do not look upon it as belonging to them in the first sense, but to Christ. He it was that, in the primary and full sense of the words, was *constantly* guided by Jehovah; for *he* alone did no wickedness, and it was in *his* mouth alone that no guile was found: it was he emphatically that walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and yet feared no evil; he put his enemies upon their guard by telling them that he would rise victoriously from the grave, and thereby had effectually prevented his resurrection, had he not had the keys of death and hell in his own power, had he not been able to open and none to shut. Thus you see that these circumstances mentioned in the psalm, and from these you may be able to collect, that all the others are principally applicable to Christ. They only belong to us, as they first belonged to him; the church does not triumph in her own right: she does not escape unhurt through her own merits: but because Christ is risen, we shall rise also: because he lives we shall live also. These are the words of men who spake as they

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ticularly
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speaks*

*all this
appears to
me painful*

they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In this manner spoke the christian David, and all the inspired prophets. In those days christians never relied on any self-sufficient goodness of their own: they confessed that all their own righteousness was as filthy rags: that they were to be cloathed upon by Christ's righteousness: and in *his*, not in *their own* righteousness, did they make their boast; let us all then follow their example; for therefore were these things given; all scripture was written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. — Having premised this, I now return to the psalm. The title of it, like all the other titles, directs us to whom it was inscribed; our translation says, a psalm of David; it should have been rendered, a psalm *to* David: that is, a psalm to Christ, of whom David, in the old testament, was a type. There is nothing more frequently found in scripture, than the promising the Messiah under the name of David; thus it is in Ezekiel, c. 37. v. 27. and David my servant shall be king over them. Now this was wrote long after the first David was dead, and cannot therefore relate to him; but

*this be true
it subverts
the foregoing
observations*

but is by all referred to Christ, who was the true David, the truly beloved. For David in the old testament signifies beloved: to whom therefore can the title of David, or beloved, be so properly applied as to Christ? Who had this testimony frequently given him by a voice from heaven, Thou art my well-beloved Son; that is, in the language of the old testament, Thou art my David. This psalm therefore is designed to shew us that Christ is our spiritual shepherd. It is a psalm to Christ. The psalmist begins, the Lord is my shepherd. This is explained in many parts of scripture. The prophet Ezekiel says, my servant David he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. Christ himself expressly says, I am the good shepherd. It would be endless to recite all the texts in which Christ is called our shepherd; and I trust it is a point so clear to all, that there is no occasion to bring more proofs of it. We are all, I hope, of Christ's fold, sheep of the house of Israel; and then Jehovah Christ will be to us what a careful shepherd is to his helpless flock; he will keep off from us every evil, he will bestow upon us whatever our christian course re-

quires; or, in the words of my text, we shall not want. If Christ is not our shepherd, we shall most assuredly want: we shall want the means of grace here, and the hopes of glory hereafter. But if we be of Christ's fold, we shall not want any thing to perfect in us a spiritual life. When we are surrounded with temptations, we shall not *want* his assistance, who will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it: if we at any time err from the right way, (as, alas! which of us does not daily!) we shall not *want* his guidance, to bring us back again to himself, who is the true way, the way to the tree of life: for thus says the prophet Ezekiel of our shepherd Christ, I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away: if we are at any time afflicted in our minds, and sick of the various changes and uneasinesses of this silly, giddy life; neither here shall we *want* assistance; for of Christ the same prophet expressly says, I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; and to these Christ himself applies, Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give

give you rest: nor finally when this scene shall close, when all mortal things shall vanish and disappear, shall we *want* his comforting presence; he will be with us and strengthen us; he will, when life shall be departing from us, open to us a glorious prospect of eternity, which will comfort us in the hour of death, will enable us to resign with the greatest confidence our souls into his hands who is our life, and will immediately after our leaving this habitation, open to us the heavenly paradise, and invite us to eat of the tree of life, watered by the river proceeding out of the throne of the lamb. Thus it is we shall not want if we be of Christ's fold. He will deliver us from every real evil, and bestow upon us every substantial comfort.

The next words of the psalm are, like the rest, stored with consolation: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. This is a beautiful description of the refreshments which Christ affords to his faithful followers. He gives them all the spiritual comforts that they can desire, and continues them in the possession of them. He maketh me to *lie down*; that is, he does not afford

good a sudden, transitory prospect of satisfaction, but makes it enduring and perpetual; we have the liberty, nay, we are invited by him to share for ever the pleasures of his service, which are contained in the words, *green pastures*. Under this image is set forth the nourishing and satisfying support of the christian in his passage through life. If we are fed in these green pastures, we shall be for ever healthful and lively; our spiritual nature will be invigorated and refreshed; for this support is what Christ ever since the foundation of the world has afforded to those that have believed in him, a comfortable knowledge of christian truths, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit. The christian doctrines are the only nourishment by which the human soul can be supported and sustained, till it comes unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. All other doctrines are only the crafty devices of sinful men, or rather of Satan himself, whose only aim it is to draw you off from the gospel of Christ, and to make you fix your eyes upon a law which your own corrupt nature prescribes instead of the perfect law of liberty, and upon the filthy

filthy rags of your own righteousness, instead of the spotless robe of gospel holiness.

But whenever any one would thus beguile your minds, as Satan did Eve's, and draw you off from the glorious and comfortable

simplicity of the gospel, into I know not

what intricacies of fanciful reveries; then

be upon your guard, and arm yourselves

with the apostle's caution, Though we, or

an angel from heaven preach unto you any

other gospel than that ye have received,

and into which all that are here present

were baptized, let him be accursed; let him

be regarded as one of those apostate spirits

whose sole employment it has been, from

the creation of the world to this hour, to

oppose the scheme of redemption. Consider

therefore, I entreat you, that the eternal

good of your souls depends upon your con-

stant meditating on the scriptures, that you

may be able to know assuredly the way of

holiness. Here, and here alone, is spiritual

support to be found. Read these sacred

books with seriousness and constancy, and

beg of God that your eyes may be opened

to see the transcendent wonders of his law,

and you will then be daily advancing to-

wards perfection, you will then be honoured with the glorious name of children of God, and Jehovah himself will be your exceeding rich reward. But, consider most seriously, if, on the contrary, you leave this heavenly manna of the scriptures, and long after the flesh pots of Egypt, the gross and destructive doctrines of men, however wise in their own conceits, you eat no longer at God's table, you are no longer of the number of Christ's disciples, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named: and remember the fate of the murmuring Israelites, who rebelling against God, and choosing other support in preference to that He supplied them with, God did indeed give them their desire, but He sent leanness withal into their souls.

The next words of the psalm are, He leadeth me beside the still waters: another image to shew the plentiful supplies of the Holy Ghost, which shall yield the true christian every thing that can renew and fructify his soul. By the side of this river he walks, upon the banks of which shall grow all trees for meat whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring

bring forth new fruits according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary, and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. This is the river, and these the fruits, by which our soul is to be supported, and nourished for ever: here is a constant supply for our daily wants of food, and extraordinary provision for our occasional necessities: these are the fruits of Christ's death, grace here, and glory hereafter. The peace and serenity of mind which the true christian receives from the gifts of the Holy Ghost, are beautifully represented by the still waters which flow on smooth and unruffled within the limits of their channel; while the wicked, in other parts of scripture, are terribly described by the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; whose disturbed thoughts and distracted looks make them fitly represented by the most agitated thing in nature.

The psalmist goes on, He restoreth my soul; that is, it is Christ that reneweth my carnal into a spiritual nature: it is he that raiseth me from the death of sin to a life of righteousness: in consequence of which spiritual

ritual resurrection here, we shall hereafter be raised in a glorified body, fit to enjoy the favour of God in his immediate presence.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, is the next christian blessing mentioned by the psalmist. Human nature, ever since the fall of our first parents, has been so corrupt and degenerate, that it has neither been able to plan or perform any duties of itself. All our sufficiency is of God. Christ is the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, are expressions, which, in substance, are so frequently found in holy scripture, that it is the height of infidelity not to be influenced by them. This inability of human nature, and this restoration and support of it by the merits of Christ, is what the psalmist here acknowledges; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. In order to understand this passage, it must be observed, that in sacred writ Christ is called the name. Thus, in the prophet Malachi, it is said, From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, *my name* shall be great among the

the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my *name*, and a pure offering: for my *name* shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts. Now this prophecy only relates to the time of Christ's kingdom, when in every nation which before knew not God, incense should be offered unto Christ, who is God's name, and a pure offering, even the offering of Christ's pure body and blood, which is the only offering in itself pure, or that can sanctify and purify others. Here then we have an exprefs declaration, that the preaching of Christ among the Gentiles is the preaching of the name, therefore Christ is the name. Besides, we know from every page of sacred writ, that it is through Christ alone that our sins are forgiven; he is the great purifier; him every purification of the law represented, and from him alone derived its efficacy; he was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world to take away the sins thereof; and had not God looked upon Christ's sacrifice as already paid before he died upon the cross, no flesh could have been saved; for it was he alone that made expiation for the sins of the world:

world: when therefore we hear the psalmist say, For thy name's sake, O Lord, be merciful unto my sin, we know that as all sin is forgiven only through Christ, therefore an inspired prophet could only ask forgiveness through Christ: wherefore be merciful unto my sins for thy name's sake, is the same as be merciful unto my sins for Christ's sake, who is thy name. So the text before us, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, declares, that when men are brought out of the destructive paths of sin and wickedness, the high way of the world, into the paths of righteousness, which lead to the new Jerusalem, it is for the sake of Christ, the name of God. Through his merits it is that the Holy Ghost is offered, which renews our souls, and continues us to the end in the way of life. Thus does our spiritual direction proceed from Christ: it is he that must send to us, as he did to his disciples, the spirit of truth. To him therefore you must always apply for spiritual comfort, and through him alone you must expect to arrive at eternal happiness, for he is the way, the truth, and the life.

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The next words of the psalm are a consolation under the most doubtful and afflicting circumstances that human nature can be in: they are a support under that which human wisdom, and human riches, for ever confess themselves unable to sustain; they are a comfort at that final and awful period of all earthly things, the hour of death: yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. This is a triumph which christianity alone enables a man to make. Death to all besides must afford a melancholy and dreadful prospect. Accordingly the psalmist here gives the reason of his undaunted boldness in these circumstances: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. That uncertainty and despair, which so frequently attend those that are leaving this life, can by no means be justly removed, but by fixing our eyes steadfastly upon Christ. The death of the body is only the earnest of another death still infinitely more terrible, the death of the soul. When therefore the one approaches, and the other threatens immediately

ately to succeed it, and we have no possibility of escaping of ourselves, we must rely on some other deliverer, we must trust on some mighty Saviour, under whose guidance we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil. This Saviour (blessed be God!) is always at hand. He never rejects the cries of afflicted mortals, who come to him in sincerity and truth. To effect our deliverance he is always with us: to this end he himself walked through the valley of the shadow of death; and in consequence of that he guides and conducts securely through it all those who rely on him. The psalmist representing in this case every true christian, says, Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. These are the marks of a true and matchless shepherd, who is ready prepared to keep off every thing that would hurt and affright his flock: his care and protection are the constant comforts of faithful christians in every dark scene of life, and at the hour of death. For our blessed shepherd Christ then stands by us and comforts us; he keeps off from us the roaring lion, which goeth about seeking whom he may devour; and himself conducts

conducts us safely to the regions of bliss and happiness, and presents us to his Father clothed in his own unspotted righteousness. Apply yourselves therefore betimes to Christ, this great deliverer, this spiritual Joshua, who alone can preserve you from all your enemies; who alone can safely lead you through the wilderness of life, through the valley of the shadow of death, and who alone can bestow upon you a never-failing eternal inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, the portion of departed saints made perfect, the glorious residence of Jehovah, and the lamb.

The next words are, Thou prepared a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. This is a description of that spiritual support, which is afforded to every true christian on his applying to God, and especially in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Thou preparest a table before me, relates to that sacred table mentioned in the old testament, and to that divine and refreshing one to which we are all now in the new testament invited by Christ himself, to partake of his body and blood; and
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to be anointed with oil, with the oil of the Holy Ghost ; that oil of gladness which will cheer and refresh us in every circumstance, will comfort our hearts, and make glad our countenances. My cup runneth over : a noble image to express the extraordinary degrees of divine mercy ! We have not only *fullness* of consolation afforded us in our christian warfare, but we have also *super-abundant* comfort : the cup of the righteous is not *barely full*, it runneth over. It is so richly stored with glorious blessings that the heart of the righteous must leap for joy, and his tongue will labour to express the sentiments of his heart, and yet by no means be fully able to do it : he will be for ever talking of the loving kindness of the Lord, and yet be never able to give a full description of it : his present peace of mind, and his prospect of future resplendent glory, which are the portion of his cup, are such mercies, such overflowings of divine goodness, as no heart can conceive, nor the tongue of angels express. To share of these inestimable blessings here mentioned, you must apply with the greatest frequency and earnestness to the Lord's table, in the blef-
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fed sacrament of the Eucharist: here it is that the Lord prepares a table before us; here it is that he anoints our head with oil; here it is that our cup runneth over: for here it is that we eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood; for here it is that we become one with Christ, and Christ with us; that we perfect the life of grace, the infancy of the life of glory. With the greatest zeal and warmth, therefore, always approach the Lord's table: this gives us our spiritual support in our passage through this wilderness of misery; and if we partake duly and rightly of this table here, we shall hereafter sit down in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; we shall share of the heavenly instead of the earthly banquet; we shall be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The psalm concludes with these words, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. The first part of the verse, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, relates to the spiritual comforts of this world. Goodness and mercy imply in them
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that gracious disposition by which God, through the merits of Christ, blesses and glorifies his saints. He it is who is good to all that call upon him, and whose mercy is over all his works. And this goodness and this mercy the faithful christian experiences from the womb to the grave: it is this that originally gives him life, and brings him out of his former nothing into existence: it is this divine mercy that afterwards gives him a new birth, that washes away the foul pollution of sin in the laver of regeneration; by which he becomes meet to inherit those pure regions where no unclean thing can enter: it is this divine goodness that restores us whenever we have erred from the way of life, that preserves in us the spiritual principle by the food he affords us in his holy sacrament; that comforts us in all our tribulations, and in the hour of death. And the Lord does not only guide and direct us here, but renders our state completely happy and blessed hereafter; which the last words of the psalm express, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. This is a description of our future blessedness, which will consist in the enjoyment of uninterrupted

rupted pleasures at the right hand of God for ever. The house of the Lord means the New Jerusalem, the city prepared for those of you that sincerely believe in God, and obey his commands, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nothing grievous either to feel or fear. The word rendered *I will dwell*, signifies in the Hebrew language, I will spend my sabbath: meaning that when God has graciously conducted me through all the stages of this life, has purified my heart, and made me fit for his glorious presence, I shall then be removed from this uncertain, fluctuating state, to the steady, uninterrupted rest prepared for the saints above, which shall never more be disturbed by the fear of change, or the apprehensions of future evil, which can never break in upon this sacred, eternal sabbath.

Thus have I given you the meaning of this whole psalm, in as plain a manner as I am able. All that remains for me now to do is, to conclude with an inference or two from the whole: First then you see that the divine and comfortable influences of the Holy Spirit, are only to be obtained in the

christian paths. These paths are pointed out to you in the holy scriptures, and in them *alone*. To them, therefore, in God's name, I earnestly exhort you all to apply. You see the confidence which David received from his trust in Christ; and the same unshaken faith you will find in every ancient patriarch of the Old Testament: their faith was christian; their life divine; their hopes heavenly. They saw, and immoveably relied upon a *future* Saviour, as you must do in a Redeemer already come. The Old Testament, for the confirmation of your faith, holds out to you in every line some christian doctrine; some article of gospel faith. Christianity, ever since the transgression of our first parents, has been the comfort of pious believers; and a perfect Saviour the only reliance of fallen, corrupted man: leave not this support; but seeing we are encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us look, and keep our eyes for ever fixed too upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.—And, lastly, the blessings enumerated in this psalm are so many and important, and so constantly afforded us from the time of our birth

birth to the final consummation of all things, for it is God that takes us out of our mother's womb, it is He that guides us with counsel, and after that receives us with glory, that if we have a due sense of them, we shall never forfeit our claim thereto, by denying our only Lord Jesus Christ that bought us, either by our unchristian principles or unchristian practices. However great the present happiness, however sublime and inexpressible the future hopes of Christ's *real* disciples are, his pretended ones are certainly excluded. The twelve thrones are prepared for the twelve apostles, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, and to rule triumphantly in Christ's glorious kingdom in power and majesty, yet good had it been for the apostate Judas if he had never been born, and as certainly will every hardened infidel in faith or practice now be excluded from the table of the faithful Abraham, and from His presence who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Turn, therefore, my brethren, to your merciful Saviour, by a sincere repentance and a lively faith; then will the Holy Ghost descend upon you, and renew your souls; he

will carry you through life with safety; he will open to you here the unbounded prospect of eternity, which will make all your troubles disappear; and he will at last make you triumphant over death and hell; he will burst the bands of the grave; he will change this corruptible into incorruption, this mortal into immortality. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

S E R M O N XVI.

MATTHEW xviii. 11.

The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.

THE redemption of man from the guilt and misery of sin displayeth to us the height and depth of every divine perfection. When we view the original work of creation, we see indeed the power and omnipotence of God shine forth. Every object declareth that the Father of the Universe is almighty; and that in heaven above, and in earth beneath, all dependeth on His irresistible will. The more we stretch our capacities to comprehend the extent of the universe, the more are we amazed at that incomprehensible power, which supporteth the infinite variety of things. But in mere creation we are rather struck with the power of God, than with his other more amiable perfections. Irresistible indeed is the power that supplieth the sun with his everlasting

light; and who doth not tremble under that arm, which shaketh, at its pleasure, the very earth from its centre? But in the works of this lower world, the good we enjoy is so miserably blended with the evils which we suffer, that many thoughtful minds have often been perplexed, when they have attempted to reconcile the *goodness* of God, with the miserable condition of His creatures. Poverty and sickness, those loathsome bodily infirmities, make such wretched havock among mortal men, that the days of human life, though short and transient, seem often infinitely too long, when oppressed with such miserable calamities. Ignorance and wickedness, those still greater evils, do so often mislead and perplex the mind, that the world we are placed in seems rather an habitation of frantic bedlamites, than of rational creatures. Nor is the general system of things in this world more smooth and easy, than the state of individuals. In one part of the earth, we have the raging pestilence and the devouring sword cutting short our threescore years and ten; and in another we have mighty cities and wealthy nations trembling from their founda-

foundations, and disappearing almost as tho' they had never been. In a word, whatever way we turn our eyes, we see, 'tis true, an almighty power presiding, but whether that power doth love or hate us; whether He is our Father to protect us, or our Judge to punish us, this outward frame of things could never demonstrate. But when He that made us determined also to redeem us, that eternal mercy then shone forth, which dwelleth in the divine nature. The incarnation of the Son of God is a proof to men and angels, that the mercy of God is over all His works. Wretched and lost as we were by our rebellion against God, the means of returning to happiness are now afforded us. The Saviour of the world hath preached to us the way of life, and hath suffered, and died on the cross, that we might be able to walk in that way. He hath given us light to direct our understandings, and power to change our affections. Without the one we should not see what is right; without the other we should have no ability to perform it. If we take but the most hasty view of what passes in the mind of man, we shall see how truly he is *lost*, and how glorious that
salva-

salvation is, which delivers him from so wretched a condition. If we could have any doubt what man thinks, and what he feels, his actions would tell us both. The disorder and confusion that prevail in the world, from the unbridled passions of those that live in it, are a notorious proof that we are not what we should be. Now all this the Saviour of the world came to correct; it was his only errand. He did not come to distinguish you by a name; he did not come, as one should sometimes think from the vulgar narrowness of his pretended followers, to establish a party in religion, but to change, to refine, to purify you. Let us take a short view of what this universal Redeemer came into the world to accomplish, that so you may judge from the state of your own souls, how far the end of his incarnation is answered to you; that where you are right, you may thank that Redeemer who made you so; and where you are wrong, you may repent and sin no more.

Now as the highest, and the sublimest of all duties are those, which we dependent creatures owe to the independent Creator, it is fit that we begin with these. Now
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what humility of soul are we taught in the gospel? How are we called upon to reverence him, who hath no beginning of days, or end of life; to hear him, when he speaketh; to obey him, when he commandeth; to receive all his dispensations as the appointments of wisdom that cannot err. With what amazing light and splendor does the evangelic revelation surround the throne of the Almighty? How divinely is he represented, cloathed with light as with a garment, and stretching out the heavens like a curtain between him and mortal men? When he manifests himself to this lower world, the earth shakes and trembles, the foundations of the hills are moved, and in all the awful terror of almighty Majesty, he comes flying upon the wings of the wind. He is represented at other times by the fore-runners and disciples of the Son of Man, who came to save us, and by his own divine lessons also, as sitting at the head of the universe, as appointing to each man his lot, and the station which he is to fill. One man is destined by his irresistible decree to appear in the lowly, laborious state of servitude and poverty; another is adorned with

with riches, magnificence, and honours. He conducteth us, as it were by the hand, into human life, when and where he pleaseth; and when he pleaseth he taketh us back again. Thus has the Son of Man enlightened our minds with regard to the Father of the Universe. Full of glory and majesty in himself, the author and disposer of every event relating to us, with what reverence and humility are *you* his creatures to appear before him. Moulded by his almighty hands, out of the clay in the streets, into the forms you now bear, you can never enough celebrate his unbounded glory, or sufficiently express your own vileness. The Son of Man hath shewed you the wisdom of loving, of adoring God; and hath thundered in your ears the folly of valuing yourselves on outward distinctions, which are only the poor necessary requisites, to keep in order this silly, tumultuous world. He came to save you from that fantastic pride which bewitcheth the human heart; and to this purpose he hath revealed to you the majesty of the God of Heaven, and the absolute nothingness of His creatures on earth. When he came to save
you,

you, he came to possess your souls with an unalterable humility; which should make you tremble before him in the highest prosperity; which should make you depend upon him with unshaken confidence in the lowest adversity. Informed as you now are, of the glorious nature of God; convinced, as you must be, that your all depends on him, with what cautious reverence should you fashion your whole lives, in conformity to his blessed will? And yet, though the Son of Man came down among us, to shew us what we owe to the Father of heaven and earth; though he giveth us his almighty spirit to enable us to perform what we owe, yet how shamefully do we stand accused in the presence of our righteous Judge? Prayer, that sacred act whereby we prostrate ourselves at the footstool of the Almighty, is by some totally neglected; is by others performed in such an offensive, indecent manner, as to turn the very act itself into a sin. For is it not a sin, and the foulest sin too, to behave in these sacred temples with wanton levity, when the word of eternal life is read to you, for your instruction and information? To sit as if you were uninterested

terested in what is spoke to you from heaven? As if the Almighty could teach, and you should be at liberty to neglect His teachings. Is it any proof, think you, that you have been illuminated by the light of the gospel, that you suffer your hearts to wander after every trifling object, in the very solemn hour of prayer? Good God! who could think that you had been taught by patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, nay by the well-beloved Son of God himself? Who that came into our temples, and saw you leaning and gazing about with the stupid indifference of idiots, could think that you had any concern in the holy service, performed by the priest? What is it to you who are thus unconcerned, that we put up petitions for those who are wearied with the burden of their sins? What avails it that we cry aloud for mercy on the penitent, afflicted sinner, when you are neither penitent, nor afflicted? The careless and unaffected having nothing to do with the petitions presented, have nothing to expect from the mercies sought for. Let me recommend it to you therefore, (and do not let me do it again without success,) to suit
your

your behaviour in this house to the business on which you come here. The mind even of the least-knowing christian, cannot be unacquainted with the awful majesty of God, with the deplorable poverty, and wretchedness of man. Why then do you act against your knowledge? Why do you not bow the knee before the Almighty? Why do you not prostrate yourselves on the earth, when you implore His pardon, when you ask His protection? There seem to be several persons in this congregation, and those advanced in years too, who appear never to bow the knee at all in prayer, except just at the altar, when they are compelled to do it. That there should be such a foul custom is the saddest proof of the ignorance and iniquity of the times. It is almost peculiar to the kingdoms to which we belong; and will, till it is amended, remain an everlasting reproach to the name of protestants, for other churches would be ashamed of such indecencies. I am sorry to return to this subject so often; but while you are not ashamed to *transgress*, I shall not be ashamed to tell you, that you do transgress. How different a conduct did

did the Son of God come down to teach you! what holy humility! what ardent devotion! what patient resignation! what eternal submission to the Father of spirits, does he inculcate, does he inspire into his faithful followers! All the pride of nature he expels, and all the humility of grace he introduces.

And as he thus came to save us from all the pride and ignorance into which we were sunk, so did he come to deliver us from all those low and selfish passions, by which we violate our neighbour's peace, and interrupt the happiness of our fellow-creatures. Man, naturally greedy of increasing possessions, that he may thereby have the means of indulging his appetites, violates every obligation, breaks through every restraint, and disregards all the miseries that others suffer. From hence he envies his neighbour's happiness, destroys his reputation, over-reaches him by every artifice, treats him as if he had no feeling, and seems to forget every thing in the whole creation, but his poor, narrow, contemptible self. From this curse Jesus Christ came down to save us. He came to enlarge
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our minds, by shewing us that there is a connection, a kind of unity among the creatures of God; that you are not to look upon yourselves as single, separate individuals, but as a part of one great body, intimately concerned for the happiness of every other, even the remotest part. To carry on this great and exalted plan, his precepts are all calculated. He commands you to rejoice in the happiness of the happy, to be afflicted for the miseries of the miserable. He commands you to contribute abundantly to the necessities of those that want; if you have but little, to spare part even of that little for their relief. He requires you to sacrifice many of your pleasures to the wants of those about you. He requires you to stoop to the infirmities of others, that you may either remove or comfort them. You are not to quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed; whatever infirmities there are in human nature, you are to bear with them, to pity them, and to use them tenderly. The injuries, which you needs must receive in your passage through life, you are to forgive perfectly and altogether,

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so as to return blessing for cursing, and good for evil. To this purpose you have a perfect unerring example held out to you. All that is required of you has been done before you. Jesus Christ has given life to every precept, and animated every divine command. Forgetful of himself, he rushed from the throne of eternity, where he sat encircled with glory and majesty, and appeared a wretched inhabitant of this wretched world, that he might sustain the weakness, and undergo the miseries, in order to purge away the sins of human nature. Hence it comes, that we see this divine preacher of poverty and self-denial, poor and destitute even of the ordinary comforts of life. Though he created all things; though he supplied the sun with his insupportable brightness, and the moon with her everlasting splendor, yet this former of all things had not where to lay his head. He commanded us not to love the world, neither the things of the world; therefore he himself trampled them all under his feet, partook of none of its enjoyments, shared none of its pleasures; but from a state of devout solitude, of holy separation,

separation, of divine self-denial. He ascended to the right hand of God, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject unto him. He requires us to love others as ourselves, but it is in imitation of his own divine example, that we may be known to be the disciples of *him*, who, for the love he bore to others, changed the eternal glories of the Godhead for the weaknesses of a mortal body; who gave up the unceasing, humble adorations of angels, for the revilings and blasphemies of ignorant, sinful men, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all his creatures. Self-forgetfulness is here rendered intelligible, and christians have an unanswerable proof, from the example of Christ, that they may, and ought to prefer the happiness of others to their own advantage. Is submission and gentleness under injuries great and unprovoked recommended to us? Are we commanded that painful lesson of stifling every resentment, and suppressing every quick motion of the soul? We do not only hear the precept, we see it more than fulfilled in the meek and patient Jesus. Reviled for his mercy, blasphemed for his goodness,

insulted for his patience, he bore every indignity to which human nature is liable, yet like a lamb before its shearers was he dumb, and opened not his mouth. If he commands *us* to bear our cross, it is only to come after *him*; if we cannot without much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God, let no tongue complain of the unalterable conditions; but do you rather look unto the Son of God, the author and finisher of your faith, and see there a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, sunk down, even from the light of God's countenance, by the sins of the whole world, and there you will find that there never was any sorrow like unto his sorrow, though he had done no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth.

Thus did the Son of God come down to save you from the corruptions of your own nature. He gave his perfect precepts to guide you; his divine example to animate you; and above all, his eternal spirit to enable you to follow both. Thus blessed then with the *means* of salvation, let your lives shew that you *are saved*. The salvation which is to be perfected in another life, by
cloathing

cloathing your mortal bodies with the splendor of immortal angels, must be begun here. Though your bodies cannot here be delivered from the weakneses of mortality, yet your souls can be freed from the dominion of sin. And this is the only pledge you have of your future deliverance. The triumph of the soul is an earnest of the future triumph of the body. Bring forth therefore the fruits that belong to your holy calling, unfeigned humility towards God, unbounded mercy towards man. If these have not yet appeared in your lives, you have not a moment to lose, for it is not your *professing* christianity, but your living christian lives that will avail you. And if the Son of God who came in mercy to save you, hath not saved you, he will soon appear in another character, dreadful to corrupt human nature, and as a judge he will condemn you.

S E R M O N . X V I I .

clearing your mortal bodies with the
 splendour of immortal age, by which you
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 umph of the body. Bring forth
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 God, undivided mercy towards man. If
 they have not yet appeared in your lives,
 you have not a moment to lose, for it is not
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 christian lives that will exalt you. And this
 the son of God who came in mercy to save
 you, hath not saved you, he will soon appear
 in another character, dreadful to corrupt
 human nature, and as a judge he will con-
 demn you. God who mercifully
 the power of all that comes and upon which
 the only guide to a wandering sinner, the
 principle of the to them who are in
 danger of death. To those who are in great
 distress of mind, may you all come
 to deliverance from sin and misery, and on

S E R M O N XVII.

P S A L M xxvii. 7, 8, 9.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice : have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, seek ye my face ; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me ; put not thy servant away in anger : Thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

THIS psalm, like every part of the word of God, directs the sons of men to the true source of happiness, from whence they may derive an abundant supply for every natural want, a never-failing remedy for every affliction. God, who mercifully hears the prayers of all that come with sincere faith, is the only guide to a wandering sinner, the only principle of life to them who are in bondage to death. To him, who is the great restorer of fallen nature, must you all come to be delivered from sin and misery, and on

this your God and Saviour must you wait in peace and quietness, till He has accomplished his full and perfect will in you, till he has subdued you to himself, and filled you with the abundance of his heavenly life. There is no support to the soul of man till it can throw itself with full confidence upon the God of heaven and earth; till finding itself redeemed from the slavery of earthly affections, its hopes and desires are fixed upon the one firm unalterable good, which is ever communicating its streams of life and happiness to the soul that is open to admit them. Upon the favour of this our Redeemer depend life and all things: in his presence is fullness of joy, and from him are derived the pure and sacred pleasures of eternity. Look not then for peace, where no peace is, in the enjoyment of worldly advantages; for these are but as a guest which tarry for a day: but turn your eyes to God, in whom are all perfections centered, who is infinitely fairer than the children of men, who overflows with mercy towards the work of his hands, and who is ever wont to give more than either we can ask or think. It was this living, mighty faith,

faith, which wrought so powerfully in the believers of every age, that scorning the offers of a perishing world, though rushed through all the opposition of fallen nature, to enjoy more and more of the redeeming power of God in their souls, and to experience still more of that divine love, which fills and beautifies every power and faculty of the soul. This is the blessing after which you must all aspire, and for which you must wait upon God your Saviour, till He speaks peace to your souls, and ransoms you from death and destruction. You must all request at the throne of mercy, the spirit and power of prayer, that you may never leave crying for deliverance, till your prayer is heard, and your cry received. The inspired psalmist has, in the words I have read, described the progress of a soul, panting after the display of heavenly love in itself, and eagerly waiting for a farther advancement in the divine and inward life, whereby the weakness of nature is lost, and the strength and perfections of God prevail. A description it is, full of heavenly wisdom to the *enquiring* soul, which whoso is wise will ponder in the depth and secret of his heart,

heart, till finding his own state and condition therein represented, he is conformed to the divine image here held forth, and thereby understands the loving kindness of the Lord. The conduct of the enlightened king of Israel will be the conduct of every true christian, who has begun to advance towards the promised land of peace and glory: such an one will join his voice with David, and cry out, "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice, have mercy also upon me, and answer me." If we run through the whole extent of the universe, and try the weight and value of every thing we meet with, we shall find that there is no help in any created object, whose perfections, be they ever so great, are not from themselves, but are all derived from the one universal supply, to which all must have recourse. There is no help in man, or angel, who are only removed above want, as they continue to drink at the fountain of living water, which runs in plentiful streams through the whole creation, and waters abundantly both heaven and earth. To God our Saviour must we cry for mercy, who alone is mighty and able to save. To the footstool of his heaven

venly

venly throne must you come, and there fall prostrate in his sacred presence, cloathed with the garments of humility, broken and contrite in heart for the grievous corruption of your nature, and emptied of every high and aspiring thought, of every flattering imagination, which would represent you as any thing higher than dust and ashes, than sin and misery. In this awful and tremendous presence, how must man, who is a worm of the earth, be humbled and reduced to nothing? Yet hither must he come or perish forever, for there is no fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, but this all-purifying fountain in the courts of the Lord's house: hither must he come, for there is no High Priest to intercede for the sinner; no appeasing sacrifice to offer; no blessing of peace and life to be communicated, but in the heavenly Jerusalem, where is that adorable High Priest, who lives and will ever live to make intercession and reconciliation and to bring forth the choicest blessings for the sons of men: hither must he come, for this is the only way into the holy of holies, the full and unclouded presence of the God of Israel, who sits enthroned between

between the Cherubim. Since these things are so, the christian supplicant, who is in earnest pursuit of real happiness, has nothing to do but to turn all the powers of his soul wholly and entirely to God his Saviour, and not to leave off interceding till the golden scepter is held forth, and life and pardon are obtained. Unto him who heareth and receiveth prayers, must all who expect deliverance come, and the language of one must be the language of all, "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me." As happiness is only to be derived from God, every thing depends on the supplicants being heard: heaven must be, as it were, stormed with prayers, and God be in a manner forced to hear and grant the petitions of his elect, who cry unto Him day and night. The soul that has felt the weight of its own inbred and powerful corruptions, and has felt the vanity of earthly things, has no prospect of peace but from a manifestation of the life and power of heaven in his soul, whereby he can rise superior to all the idle insignificant events of this world, and encrease in that divine and heavenly nature, wherein all the riches of eternity

eternity are contained. This is the request of the christian's lips, and the only wish of his soul : he wants to know how this happiness, which the world cannot give, may be attained, and it is for this he prays, when he says, " Have mercy also upon me, and
" answer me : " " Do thou, O God, my
" Saviour, the work of whose hands I am,
" look down in pity upon thy wretched
" creature, and behold me wandering I
" know not where, in pursuit of happiness
" I cannot find : Take compassion, I be-
" seech Thee, on that blindness which hin-
" ders me from seeing, and that weakness
" which hinders me from walking in the
" way that leads to life. I am, Thou
" knowest, an object of thy all-comprehend-
" ing mercy, for it is thou alone canst give
" me what I ask for, an inheritance that
" fadeth not away, like earthly vanities,
" but eternal in the heavens : this is my
" request, something that will perfectly fill
" up the mighty void in my soul ; that will
" calm the raging passions in my breast, and
" give me peace which changeth not. In
" Thee, my redeeming God, is all this cen-
" tered, and from Thee alone can I be ef-
" fectually directed to obtain it. Send
" forth

“ forth then, I humbly beseech Thee, a ray
“ from thyself, the inexhaustible source of
“ uncreated light, to direct my steps into
“ the way of peace; utter thy still small
“ voice in the secret of my heart, and say,
“ this is the way, walk thou in it; and
“ finally, or all besides will avail me no-
“ thing. So renew and restore the languid
“ powers of my soul by thy creative word,
“ that the direction which thou givest I may
“ be able and willing to follow.”—When
the soul of man is in this state, then is it
prepared, and will never fail to hear the
blessed voice of the Saviour of the world,
proceeding from the mercy-seat and saying,
“ Seek ye my face.” In these words are
contained the whole extent of divine love;
and the depth of human wisdom and
happiness. It is by this direction that we
may be guided through the intricate laby-
rinth of life, and may walk securely amidst
those perplexing ways which lead such
numbers from the path of happiness. If
you seek the Lord with all your heart, as the
only good of your souls, as the only object
worthy your love; if you pray to be
drawn off from all attachment to the crea-
ture, and to be only actuated by the living
presence

presence of God in your souls, you will then find that peace and contentment which you know not where to look for now; and which every thing promises but nothing gives you. The presence of God is the only spring of light and comfort to the human soul; it is here man can find his happiness, and continue to enjoy it, amidst all outward interruptions whatever. No persecution, no distress can deprive a real christian of this heavenly banquet, which is always prepared for them who seek it. How great is the privilege here afforded to mankind, when God permits us to pass by the painted trifles that surround us, and to aspire after a divine and mystical union with himself! He, who is all perfection; in whom is centered every good; and, from whom, as an inexhaustible fountain, every beauty in the natural and spiritual world is derived; who is the bright light of the heavenly kingdoms, and the inexpressible glory of the angelic host, *He*, (forever blessed be His name for this his wonder of mercy!) condescends to invite *men* to share of this sacred blessing, and to fill every desire of their soul in the enjoyment of himself, who

is

is all in all. How should it humble you to hear the mighty God directing His gracious words to such vile worms and stubborn rebels as yourselves; and how should it enflame your hearts with the fire of heavenly love to see the highest happiness offered you, when you were in the lowest state of misery. — Though we are in a world of the utmost wretchedness and confusion, yet in the presence of God our Saviour we find a secure retreat; here the storms are hushed, and nature is freed from that hurry and tumult into which sin has thrown it. The christian is not to depend on future expectations only, but finds the happiness of eternity begun in his soul in this life: the light of God's countenance shining in his heart, dispels all his fears, and is a principle of comfort and joy, when all earthly things fail. With what rapture may a christian consider his state, who knows his happiness depends upon what can never be diminished, even on the boundless perfections of the Godhead: united to which, he will know nothing but peace, joy, and love, from age to age, and from generation to generation. The christian being thus invited by God himself

himself to drink freely and plentifully of this river of life, answers with holy David; "My heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, "will I seek." This is the blessed resolution of a disciple of Christ; and oh! that God would give all here present grace to breath forth the same heavenly inclination. When the soul of man has once tasted of this divine gift, has once found the difference between earthly and heavenly joys, it is all on fire to receive still more and more of the sacred illumination, and to be kept free from every worldly incumbrance, that so the voice of mercy may be heard without interruption. The Lord, who redeemed him, and has begun to shed abroad his love in his heart, is the only object of his desire, is the only thing he seeks. The language of his heart is; "Thy presence, Lord, into "which thy redeeming love has permitted "so vile a wretch to enter, is the sanctuary "wherein my whole heart desires to dwell "from henceforth even for ever. I know "no good but Thee, and I wish for nothing "but a full and perfect manifestation of "thyself to my heart. Keep me, I humbly "beseech thee, in a constant sense of thy
" holy

“ holy presence, and let me ever feel thy
“ gracious influence upon my soul. In thy
“ light may I see light, and may every mo-
“ tion of my heart be guided by thy uner-
“ ring direction. Vouchsafe, in pity to thy
“ helpless servant, to draw me off from every
“ interruption of this creature, that so I
“ may be thine, and thine only and entirely.
“ Subdue the restlessness of my own nature,
“ that so the gentlest whisper of thy divine
“ spirit may be heard, and its blessed effects
“ be produced. Be pleased to finish and
“ compleat thy work, by introducing such
“ an holy, perfect calm and silence within,
“ that no outward object or inward passion
“ may in the least interrupt my sacred re-
“ pose in thy hallowed presence.”—This
enjoyment of the divine presence, and this
union with the God and Saviour of the
world, being the only foundation of happi-
ness, the christian, who has had the eyes of
his understanding opened, by the power of
his Redeemer, to see these great truths, is
very importunate in the next petition of the
psalm; “ Hide not thy face far from me;
“ put not thy servant away in anger.” The
whole creation cannot satisfy the desires of
man;

man: he finds an emptiness in every object that he enjoys, and though he raves from creature to creature till his days are at an end, he finds himself more wearied and dissatisfied than when he first set out, and returns convinced that every object of human pursuit, however loud its pretensions may be, should have this divine description and warning conspicuously inscribed upon it, "Vanity of vanities; all in me is vanity."—When we consider the horror of a soul which has quenched the heavenly fire from time to time conveyed into it from the celestial altar; has spent its whole strength in ridiculous empty schemes of its own, in direct opposition to the revelation of the divine will, and that after all nothing remains but an unsatisfying view of the *past*, and a certain fearful looking for of judgment to *come*; who can wonder that the christian petitioner is importunate for a continuance and increase of that heavenly blessing, which satisfies all his wants, and fills up his soul to the full? In the light of God's countenance he finds his joy and happiness consist, and that nothing can hurt him while he is possessed thereof. It is

therefore always his petition to his God and Saviour, "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." This world is a place of banishment, far removed from the full light of heaven, and the glorious display of the divine perfections; nothing but disorder and misery in a thousand shapes appear, to whatever we turn our eyes; all is confusion from the cradle to the grave; out of this troubled sea it is that the christian prays to be delivered, and brought into the holy tranquillity of the pure, unruffled, celestial nature. But how shall a soul, clogged with this filthy load of flesh, with this carnal earthly body, ever soar above its dark confinement of fallen nature, and reunite and mix itself with the exalted principle of perfect purity? Here must we glorify the incomprehensible greatness of redeeming love, which has made a way for the soul to escape from its loathsome prison. God is our help, and is become our salvation, to deliver us from sin, and all its fatal consequences. To him then must you all
come

come to obtain this great deliverance; to him must you cry night and day, to obtain forgiveness of your numerous offences, and to receive the gift of reconciliation, by having your impure nature washed and cleansed in the blood of the Lamb of God, the heavenly fountain opened for earthly sin and for uncleanness: to this God of love must you come, and entreat him to take possession of your hearts, and beg that his kingdom of love and light may be established there, and his holy will be done in this your subdued, earthly nature, as it is in the obedient orders of the heavenly kingdom. If you thus throw yourselves upon him without limitation, joy and mirth will be heard in all your dwellings: there will be a light shining in this your prison, and all your powers will be employed in singing praises to your Redeemer, who is thus able and willing to subdue all things to himself. To *Him* will you look, and on *Him* will you depend from day to day, and join with angels and men in giving honour and praise unto God; for His is the kingdom of earth and heaven; His is the power of extending

happinefs to the utmost limits of creation ;
His therefore, and *His only* is the glory of
creating, redeeming, and glorifying for ever
 and ever. Amen.

SER-

S E R M O N XVIII.

LUKE X. 37.

Go, and do thou likewise.

IT is a glorious proof of the goodness of God to man, that he hath been graciously pleased to make His own divine, unerring conduct, the rule of ours. He that sitteth in the heavens over all, who commandeth his sun to shine alike on the evil and on the good; who commandeth his rain to fall without distinction on the just and on the unjust; even this adorable Being commandeth us to follow His great example, and to love, and to do good to all, as far as our power will extend. The blessings of creation, and the infinitely greater blessings of redemption, this universal parent showereth down on all his creatures. No iniquity can check the motions of his love, no rebellion can restrain the workings of His mercy. He createth, He preserveth, He purifieth, and redeemeth, in spite of all

the rebellion of man ; in spite of all the folly that prevaieth in this wretched world.

His arms of mercy are ever open to receive us ; His almighty power is ever prepared to support us. From that remote, sacred moment, when He first vouchsafed to call created beings into life ; from thence, even to this hour, hath His mercy been over all

His works. Of this we had abundant proof in the work of redemption. To raise our

miserable nature, He united unto it his own divine essence. To heal our sicknesses, and

to dispel our sorrows, by virtue of that tremendous, mystic union, He himself became

subject to sickness, and more than others a man of sorrows. To give us knowledge, the

All-wise became ignorant ; to give us strength, the Almighty became weak ; to

give us life everlasting, the Eternal died on the cross. The God of ages, as it were, forgot himself, that all His creatures might be

happy ; and universal love seemeth almost to have swallowed up every other attribute

of the divine nature. In imitation then of this great original, “ Go, and do thou like-

“ wife.” This is the profitable conclusion, which our Lord draweth from the parable

of

of the good Samaritan, in the words I have read to you. You must not suppose that this parable hath no particular or precise meaning; or that it is a loose and indistinct account of the behaviour of one man towards another without nicely regarding particular circumstances. No; it is a faithful and exact description of what has been actually done; but it is the description of him who is indeed good; from whom angels in heaven, and men on earth, receive all they have, and all they hope for. By the good Samaritan is meant the Saviour of the world; by the wounded traveller is meant the whole race of mankind. Under the actions of the good Samaritan is represented the mercy of our Redeemer, through whose abundant goodness we that were dead are alive again; we that were lost are found. Let us then contemplate the meaning of this holy parable with due attention, that we may see and adore the mercy of our Redeemer; that we may also be so far conformed to His divine image, that for the future we may repent of our uncharitableness, and go, and do like him.—The parable begins with these words; “ A certain
“ man

“man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.”—

Now here we have an exact parabolical description of the fall of man, whom God created upright and perfect; a living finite image of His own infinite perfections. But when this immortal spirit of man descended from the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, to perform his course on earth; by the suggestion of his own nature, not kept under due subjection to the will of heaven; or by the subtle allurements of other rebellious beings, he revolted from his God, lost his glorious paradisiacal nature, was mortally wounded by this sad apostacy in his tenderest part, and instantly was found half dead; but a death it was that affected his far better half, for it destroyed all the faculties of his soul, left him dead to God, and heavenly things; and only alive to this world, and all its empty vanities. Thus were we all left on our fall in paradise: we that once could contemplate the eternal truths of God, could now contemplate them no more: we that once delighted

delighted in praising and adoring the God of men and angels, now trembled before Him as our just Judge, dreading the purity of His holiness : we that once lived in exalted happiness on earth, blessed with a still more glorious hope of a yet higher happiness in the heavens above, all at once fell from this divine state, into misery here, into a certain fearful looking for of judgment and lowest wretchedness hereafter. We that were exalted almost to the angels in glory and splendour, in a moment sunk down almost on a level with the very beasts of the earth. And what added to our misery, and made it compleat, was, our inability to help ourselves. It was not in man, or in any thing which he could perform, to raise himself from this wretched depth. The spirit of God forsook him, for he was impure and corrupt ; and having vainly trusted to himself, (which is still the great iniquity of man,) he was left to see that in *that* self dwelt no good thing. To whatever part of the creation he turned his eyes, he saw none that was able to save. All creatures depend, like man, from day to day, for the support of their various natures,

tures, on the God who formed them. The parable therefore proceeds to tell us, "that there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." By the *Priest* and *Levite* are here meant the *Patriarchal* and *Mosaic* dispensations. These could not restore man to the life he had lost; for then needed not the Son of God to have descended from heaven. All they could do, (but *this* they very effectually did) was to point out the lost estate of man, and redemption only by Jesus Christ, the good Samaritan. For our great Creator to have now given us an holy law, and to have expected our obedience to it, would have been in some measure, to have triumphed over us in our misery. Our nature was become so corrupt, that we knew no obedience but to our own wretched desires and appetites. Had even the exalted law of angels been given to us, it would only have encreased our guilt, and added to our misery. All hopes of deliverance then by obedience to a law were lost. The lowest depth, and inmost ground

ground of the soul of man was defiled. Uncharitableness, lust, and pride, with every foul affection and hateful passion, had deafened the ear against every call to love, purity, and humility. In a word, man was become totally and only carnal, and every law which God could give must be totally and only spiritual. The more laws, therefore, the more guilt. In this helpless state, the slaves of sin and death, children of corruption and misery, to whom must we have recourse? Who is able and willing to deliver us from all the miseries of time and eternity, into which we are plunged? Let us hear what is related by our great physician, in the next words of the parable: “ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, “ came where he was: and when he saw “ him, he had compassion on him, and went “ to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his “ own beast, and brought him to an inn, “ and took care of him.” Here now we have the method of man’s redemption pointed out in a clear and exact manner, under these parabolical images. The Samaritan who saw, pitied, and relieved the wounded

wounded traveller, is Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. From the throne of his heavenly glory, where from all eternity he had sat encircled with light and majesty, even from that divine exaltation, did he look on the misery of his creatures here on earth, and hasten himself to help them. "For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to loose those that are appointed to death." Our misery was the effectual prayer that reached his merciful ears: the God of love could not see a world lost, without determining to save it. When He saw us, He had compassion on us. We know, that in the days of his incarnation, the misery of man afflicted and grieved him to the soul. The death of Lazarus drew tears and pity from him: he could not see the desolation made by sin among the children of men without weeping and lamentation. To see His own divine workmanship so defaced, as by death it was; to see the image of His own Godhead mangled and torn as it now appeared; to see the sons of the morning, and

and heirs of immortality, shut up in shades of darkness, and fettered by chains of death; "When He thus saw us, "He had compassion on us, and came to us." He laid aside the splendor of his divine nature, in which he had shone from all eternity, and mercifully assumed the various weaknesses of flesh and blood, that he might deliver us from misery, and exalt us to the right hand of God. Full of love and mercy he came down among us, performing the meanest offices for our recovery. This is aptly represented to us in these words of the parable; "He bound up his wounds "pouring in oil and wine;" tenderly administering all the means of comfort; and when the good Samaritan had this done, "He then set the wounded traveller on his "own beast, and brought him to an inn, "and took care of him." Behold now and see, if ever any love was equal to this, with which the Lord our God had loved us! Not content to heal us by his mere word, he undergoeth all the difficulties of our journey, and suffereth in our stead. He carrieth us safe to the place of rest, and walketh Himself beside us, with weary and painful

painful steps ; guarding us from the various evils and temptations of human life, and comforting us with the divine consolation of the gospel of peace. Thus does he conduct us into the bosom of his church, the sacred resting place for the sons of men. Here he taketh care of us, and supplyeth us with all things necessary for our wretched condition upon earth. Here is his word to remove our ignorance, and to enlighten us with eternal truth. Here is a merciful Saviour, ready to hear our prayers, and to present them as our great High-Priest before the throne of our God, and to bring us back in return, greater blessings than we dared to ask for. In this holy sanctuary of his church, is grace to help in every time of need. The spirit of God is ever ready to support us in the hour of trial ; to deliver us from evil ; to keep us pure in prosperity ; to support us in adversity ; to comfort us in the hour of death ; to glorify us in the day of judgment. Thus universally does the good Samaritan take care of us. He guideth us here on earth with his counsel, and after that receiveth us into his glory in heaven. The next words of the parable conclude the
description

description of our Redeemer's goodness :
" And on the morrow when he departed,
" he said unto the host, take care of him :
" and whatsoever thou spendest more, when
" I come again, I will repay thee." Thus
does our Redeemer's goodness extend from
age to age ! Thus is he ever with us to the
end of the world ! Whatever we owe, and
much it is indeed we owe to the God of
heaven and earth, here represented by the
host ; all this our Lord payeth, and thereby
procureth us admission into the church of
God. His life he voluntarily gave for our's
that was forfeited : the punishment that we
should have endured, he stept in, and bore
in our stead. For all our after-transgres-
sions, he, in the depth of his incomprehen-
sible mercy, maketh himself answerable.
" Whatsoever thou spendest more, saith he,
" when I come again, I will repay thee."
He here chargeth himself with all our trans-
gressions, and thus sheweth himself the
Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of
the world. He willed not that we should
die for our iniquity, therefore he bore the
shame, and endured the pain of the cross.
He will plead the virtue of this all-sufficient
death.

death in our behalf, and thus will he repay, yea, and abundantly repay, for all the iniquity of created beings. He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, therefore he shall live. His hands formed him; his blood redeemed him; therefore he shall at last arrive at glory! How can we now sufficiently adore the mercy described in this holy parable! We praise the author of our redemption most acceptably, when we imitate with holy zeal, his divine example. It will but little profit you, to contemplate the unbounded mercy of the blessed Jesus, if your own hearts are not softened, and rendered merciful as his. You must each of you meditate on all his goodness; and you must all in your several stations go and do likewise. Consider then, that we, on whom the Son of God had mercy, were his enemies and blasphemers; and let this teach you, that every private injury is to be totally forgotten, when your neighbour standeth in need of your assistance. Though in *your* opinion, he deserveth nothing at your hands; though he should again and again have returned evil for good; yet by the unalterable laws of heaven, whoever wanteth deserveth.

Can

Can the christian, who seeth his Saviour showering down blessings from day to day upon himself; who knoweth that those blessings are not deserved, who feeleth that they are not employed to the honour of him who gave them; can he make ingratitude a pretence for withholding farther favours, when he must himself daily solicit the God he hath daily offended, for blessings he hath daily perverted? To exclude the ungrateful from your kindness, is to exclude yourself from the mercy of heaven. Never enquire then after what they deserve, but after what they want from you. If you have it in your power to relieve your enemy, the Almighty hath then appointed you the protector and comforter of your enemy. As you, unworthy of the divine care, are still preserved and blessed by it; so when you see your enemy stand in need of your assistance, then do you, like the faithful servant of an all-blessing God, go, and do likewise. And as you are not to deny blessings to your own enemies, so are you neither to refuse them to those, whom you may think the enemies of God. He is able and prepared to avenge his own cause, to support his own

Vol. I. U glory.

glory. He requireth not your prudence to direct; nor your arm to execute. He alone is the Judge of all His creatures; and He alone knoweth the degrees of our guilt, and the due proportion of our punishment. Like your great example, the good Samaritan, who disregarded all the religious differences between himself and the suffering Jew, so do you never permit any distinctions in religion, to lessen your love, or to check your charity towards any of the creatures of God. Who made you a judge over the minds and opinions of your fellow-creatures? To their own master they stand or fall; and you will never be punished here or hereafter, because another hath rejected the truth which you embraced. Besides, who hath made you the standard of truth? What evidence do you give, that all opinions should yield to your's? How know you but you may be fondly contending for some favourite error, when you imagine yourself the laudable advocate of truth? He that best knoweth the limits and extent of the mind of man, will be most wary and cautious, even in supporting his best grounded opinions. We have seen, and do still see,

so many wild conceits obstinately embraced even by the best understandings, that we are now well aware, that human wisdom is no security against the most extravagant error, and that the most obstinate bigotry is no proof of truth. What appeareth to you then as true, embrace; but do not bring so much unmerited disgrace on the gospel of peace, as to hate and persecute another, because he seeth not as you see. Be the religion of your neighbour what it may, do you relieve him, as far as you possibly can, in all his wants. If his *faith* be wrong, let your *practice* be right. A thousand things may much extenuate his guilt in believing amiss, but very little can be said in such a case, for your acting amiss. In every circumstance then only ask, whether your neighbour wants your help: never enquire whether he be of the church of Rome or England; whether he is of this, or that denomination of christians. If he is miserable, whatever else he is, fly to his succour; for that is the blessed work of the God who dwelleth above. This it much concerneth you of this congregation to attend to; as your situation among the various jarring sects

fects of christians requireth your particular care, that you offend not in this important point. Your business is to do good to all, and doubt not but the Almighty, whose inviolable province it is, will without your assistance, know how to punish, not to triumph over helpless misery, but for that blessed end, to remove the errors of his creatures.

And as you have in the great example of your Lord directions *whom* to help, so have you also *how* you are to help them. A christian is not to do good to others with a view to his own advantage. He is not to shut up his benevolence, within the scanty limits of *self*. He is not to dwell on his own profit, but on others' necessities: contemplate, as you ought, the pure disinterested love of your Redeemer; see him conducting every event to that one great end, the happiness and glorification of all his creatures visible and invisible; and then as far as man can imitate God, "Go
" and do thou likewise."

2 AU 58

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

